NOTICE TO READERS. When you finish reading this magazine place a one cent stamp alongside of this notice, hand same to any postal employe, and it will be placed in the hands of our soldiers or sailors at the front. *No wrapping—no address.* A. S. BURLESON, *Postmaster-General*

February 1918

The Black Cat

Clever Short Stories

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PERIODICAL DIVISION

City Physicians Explain Why They Prescribe Nuxated Iron

To Make Beautiful, Healthy Women and Strong, Vigorous Men

NOW BEING USED BY OVER THREE MILLION PEOPLE ANNUALLY

Quickly transfers flabby flesh, toneless tissues, and pallid cheeks of weak, anæmic men and women into a perfect glow of health and beauty—Often increases the strength of delicate, nervous, run-down folks 100 per cent. in two weeks' time

IT is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen, that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron.

Extracts from some of the letters received are given below:

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and Medical Author, says: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron." Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale—the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"I have used Nuxated Iron widely in my own practice in most severe aggravated conditions with unfailing results. I have induced many other physicians to give it a trial, all of whom have given the most surprising reports in regard to its great power as a health and strength builder."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European Medical Institutions, says: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth."

Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron.

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day for two weeks, then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run down people who were ailing all the while rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete

and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance, and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.

Dr. H. B. Vail, formerly Physician in the Baltimore Hospital, and a Medical Examiner, says: "Throughout my experience on Hospital staffs and as Medical Examiner, I have been astonished at the number of patients who have vainly doctored for various diseases, when in reality their delicate, run-down state was simply the result of lack of iron in the blood. Time and again I have prescribed organic iron—Nuxated Iron—and surprised patients at the rapidity with which the weakness and general debility were replaced by a renewed feeling of strength and vitality. I took Nuxated Iron myself to build me up after a serious case of nervous exhaustion. The effects were apparent after a few days and within three weeks it had virtually revitalized my whole system and put me in a superb physical condition."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, rundown conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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The Black Cat

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Two Stars

EVERY *time the Famous Players press agent looks at Louise Huff, he breaks out in a new place. That is, he runs a fresh sheet into his typewriter and adds a few well chosen words to the good things he has already said about her. We are informed that Miss Huff is a fraction of an inch over five feet; weighs* 105 *pounds—um—er—with her clothes on; and with her light, fluffy hair, shadowy gray eyes and fair complexion, is not a bit "hard to look at" on the screen, or off. As the p. a. would say: "There is a certain charm of mannerism and face that seems best described by what the French would call 'spirituelle.'"*

So much for the front cover. Jack London's picture and his letter, on the back cover, are reminders that it is just nineteen years this month since the BLACK CAT accepted his first story. That acceptance was the turning point in his career; it was the wisp of encouragement that made him go on at a time when he was losing his grip, when he was despairing of ever learning to write and was utterly sick of "cutting his hands on his tools." If he hadn't tried just once more, he would never have written any message to other ambitious writers. We're glad he tried here.

THE BLACK CAT CLUB

THE twenty-five dollar prize for the best story in the November BLACK CAT, determined by vote of the club members, was awarded to Margaret D. Stevens, author of *The Rosemary of Remembrance*. Prizes for criticisms were awarded to the following persons, in the order named: G. Lombard Kelly, Augusta, Ga.; Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Lowell C. Leslie, Delphos, Ohio; H. L. Greenwald, Pittsburg, Pa.; Walter E. Ross, New Haven, Conn.; J. W. Voils, Sioux City, Iowa; Miss Janet Hayes, New York City.

The Rosemary of Remembrance presents an interesting situation, with a well concealed surprise, that tantalizes even the sophisticated reader. The author apparently reveals the entire plan of deception, yet withholds the information that the deceivers are really married. The only clue, and one that is likely to be misconstrued by the reader, is the incident of the cantaloupe. The intimacy between a married man and a supposedly single lady is a bewildering element; and one begins to wonder how the former is going to defend his conduct. His defense proves entirely satisfactory, and his delight at foiling the meddlers is a perfectly natural feeling, as most people resent the artificial matchmaking of outsiders, prefering to work out their own destiny in such matters. Readers who have ever attended a class reunion can appreciate the recorded changes in campus, classmates, and mental perspective. The setting of the story may be of particular interest to those alumni who recognize the Iowa State Teachers' College background in such references as "Dry Run," "Prexie's house converted into an isolation hospital," and "artistic new entrances to the driveway."

One may concede the nobility yet question the probability of the supreme sacrifice related in *The Man the Fly Lit On*. The motive is not strong enough; no soldier is ready to die for another soldier's sweetheart as set forth in this case. The foreign setting of the story is brought close home to the reader by the introduction of the common house fly. The antics of that pest are so familiar that the suspense, hinging on its actions, is sustained to a remarkable degree; no game of chance could possibly make the situation so vivid. The hesitation of the comrades emphasizes the great truth that heroes are created by stress of circumstance and duty, rather than by something heroic in man's nature. And the contempt of the two comrades for the one who they think has turned yellow is pathetically human, in that each has flinched when his supreme moment approached, and by his flinching escaped for the time being. The justification of the hero's supposed yellow streak weakens the conclusion. The story should have ended with the discovery of the sugar on the dead man's lips.

While the employer and the office assistant who work in "close harmony" are not new to fiction, it may safely be said that *An Outrage Or So* introduces new types to that class. The mental processes of D. Dacres and Gertie Gilfoil are interesting, and the adventures of these two are worthy of continuation for the entertainment of those readers who are not over depressed by the slangy style of the narrator. The pithy vernacular of the office girl, while giving a directness to the story, is nevertheless one of the outrages, and explains, incidentally, why D. Dacres "hasn't got swell clients." A girl of the social standing of D. Dacres would never choose a department-store Gertie as an assistant in law practice. These "supermen" who carry out the retaliatory outrages on Boss Swords are so far superior to the most advanced Shavian heroine that one may become too biased in their favor to look for every fault with a literary microscope. And it is not hard to excuse the crude style of Gertie Gilfoil when one considers that she probably picked up typewriting at home evenings, or went through night school in a hop, skip and a jump.

An International Incident is a story of setting and character, with a plot embodying rapid changes in cause and effect. One sympathizes at once with the Deacon's efforts to disentangle himself from the complications arising from the theft of an international boundary stone, a situation which he gets into deliberately, though without previous knowledge of the liabilities. The Deacon is piously religious and has a wife who is jealous of his every action, two important points without which the author would have employed coarser technique. The Deacon is conscientious, however, only when he is fearful of being discovered in some indiscretion. His various subterfuges are timed to a nicety and form a natural sequence of action. He is never nonplussed for long, although he is continually confronted with a new problem arising from one he thinks solved. The reader cannot help but rejoice when he finally does "get shet" of his white elephant, the boundary post. Great care on the author's part in preparing the story is quite evident in every line.

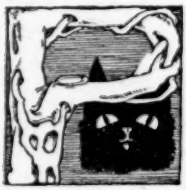
The Blindness of Courage is the best of the "Pardners of Wander Inn" stories. The situation, the feud between an editor and an offending citizen, is not unusual; but the cleverness of the ending makes the reader forget about other stories along this line. The

(*Continued on page* 45)

THE HANGING BASKET

BY HENRY D. MUIR

"Marriage is a desperate thing. The Frogs of AEsop were extreme wise; they had a great mind to some Water, but they would not jump into the Well, because they could not get out again."—John Selden's Table Talk.



PETER De Haas, basket maker, was throned on his natural seat of vantage and Solomonic judgment, the work stool; so, while his fingers plied nimbly the willowy task, the mind and the tongue of him were at easy liberty to "have it out" again with wife Christine. Caustic yet timid was Peter at this early hour of the forenoon, when the stone jug on the lower shelf of the little cupboard in the moist basement room in which he worked was still as a symbol to Bacchus; but the children being off to school or play, it was highly proper that he should begin.

"Tinnie!" he called, slapping a selected bunch of sopped, pliant reeds along the edge of the trough. "Tinnie, come here once!"

In her grimy kitchen, above, Christine caught the subterranean rumble, but response she deigned not. She was toweling heaped-up dishes. Grimly she smiled and let her eyes shift to the hook in the half-swung door, with its dangling appendage of shawl, plainly enough a new and valued purchase.

Repetition was in brave good order in the depths, and soon again came the masculine summons: "Tinnie, Tinnie; come here once!"

This time the face of the spouse unfurled a battle-flag of flush; her shrewd little gray eyes widened with sparkle and then narrowed to piglike slits of light. She seized a plate,—a well-nicked one.

"That for you!" she cried crisply from the head of the wind of staircase to the cellarage, poising a moment for her missile-messenger of defiance to crash on debris of the work-den. Then she signified with a door-slam a closed argument. Not that she expected it to be so clinched forever, these being but familiar and time-honored simple passages in the De Haas orchestration.

Slowly the basket maker rose and stood blinking, as a streamer of sunlight through the small-paned little window of his cavern took him brightly in the face. It lit up a tawny and lined countenance of middle age, with large dreamy eyes, which shifted their regard presently to an oddly-shaped basket suspended from the ceiling and all but just touching the beaten earth floor. Then he turned lazily, kicking aside a splinter of crockery, and ambled to the cupboard.

The stone jug on the lower shelf was no longer a mute symbol of Bacchus.

It was in the faded and easy-flowing hamlet of Rushton, a reactionary suburb to the pellmell, politics-driven Mistress of the Mich, that these commonplace shuttlings of domesticity happened on a May morning; and it was in the evening of that destined day that the poet of the place was dipped into woof and weft of the weave. Richard Hartley, shoaled but unembittered, though thirty-odd, sat smoking the digestive after-supper pipe on the veranda of his little brown cottage, when to him uprose, like Psyche of the lamp, young Alberta De Haas. Slimness and blondeness characterized Alberta; and her twelve-year-old girl-brain, under the flopsy top of titan, alert and innocuously ambitious, was no common poohed-away refreshment to Poet Richard. So he greeted her now with hail-fellow familiarity and easy cheer.

"Well, Berta, and what's up in this balm o' the eve? Are they at it again?"

"Yep," sighed Alberta, seating herself on

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the topmost of the few steps; "this time it's about a shawl. Ma bought one yesterday." Furtively she glanced over her shoulder and scouted the road-line, dim through gray shadow. Then she added, "But, of course, it's mostly Anders, just as always."

"Poor Bill! And she still keeps him dangling? Why does she? But tell me, why does she keep him at all?"

"Well, now," protested the fledging, flushing up, "and why shouldn't she? Are you as old-fashioned as all that?"

"Oh, no, Berta; I was just joking; of course, now more than ever, every well-regulated housewife should have a lover."

"Right—O!" sighed Alberta.

"Still I think it's high time for Bill Anders to 'go west, young man.' Don't you, now, really?"

"It would be more comfortable," assured the girl. "My, what rows, this last winter; what holy cut-ups! And before the children, too!" Her tone refined itself, subconsciously following the pitch maternal.

"Such a brood of you!" exclaimed the poet. "Is it seven?—or eight?"

"Nine, with me, and leaving out the dead ones. They married just seventeen years ago to-night. Yes, this is the anniversary! And I don't think either of them remembers!" The volatile voice was indicative of plain shock, with certain underlayers of scorn. Then she broke out with, "Oh, Mr. Hartley, how I wish I lived here with you and could play on the violin!"

The poet merely puffed out rings and regarded the sickle of moon, the wisps of cloud, and the climbing star beyond. The girl continued:

"Pa finished working on the queer, long basket yesterday. He'll take it over to Bowersville Wednesday in the cart. Perhaps that's what started him,—getting it off his mind, you know."

"Yes, I know," half soliloquized her listener. Then, rousing up, he said: "Certainly that was a freak order your father got from old Mr. Marvis. These wickerwork fantasies must be paid for. Why so large a basket?"

"Oh, the Marvises live in that old red-brick, turreted house,—you've seen it, Mr. Hartley,—one of the seven prides of the 'seventies. There's a wallow of room there, of course; but the old gentleman took the notion to economise on space and use the shaft of a very dusty and very dumb dumb-waiter for dirty linen. It's just a clothes hamper,—that's all it is, Mr. Hartley, a common, common, common clothesbasket!"

"Too bad!—a work of art for mole-darkness and doddering eld."

"Yes; no romance, Mr. Hartley,—no, not even a poem!"

The bard snapped her up, and drooled:

"Now, if 'twere a nurs-er-y,
A sunny, funny nurs-er-y,
I'd put it in my vers-er-y,
And———"

It was at this brittle juncture of sense and idiocy that the anticipated drifted to their ears from the leafy lane. A friendly catbird abandoned his bush and wavered away. There were sounds of blows and curses, the latter being of true full-developed maturity, sexless and shameless, whether uttered in shrill tremolo or in gruff basso.

"Wonder who's on top!" sighed Alberta, rising. The poet followed her to the roadway, parting the leafage.

"The old woman for this stake," hazarded Hartley. And so it was, apparent to both the questers. The small but wiry Mrs. De Haas bestraddled victoriously her prostrate team mate, cuffing him roundly and occasionally twisting the irate features of him into powdery dust. It was a spectacle, there in the twilight, that reminded one of the onlookers of the obstreperous wooing of the White-Faced Decticus, magnified on a proportional scale. Even as he quaintly was thinking this, the "female of the species" gave the head under manipulation one last thrust, sprang lightly to her feet, and fled to the roadway. Her spouse lumbered in her wake, bearlike, cursing.

So the watchers watched, and the wisp of warfare died away, and the music of May hummed placidly on with covered bruises. Even the dust, settling through essence, was a balm more than an irritant to the nostrils of the two, standing now so quietly and mutually sympathetic at the

edge of the white line of road. Presently the girl spoke; her frail words were the familiar ones, newly toned in naturalness —frank in shadow as the night, into which she darted on uttering them:

"Oh, if only I might take violin lessons—and live here with you, Mr. Hartley!"

The poet waited that space that it would take her to reach the De Haas dooryard; then he entered his own little house and "shut up shop" for himself, as he commercially phrased it.

Now when Richard Hartley elected to bury his muse and himself in Rushton-on-the-Ridge, which was some few years previous to this episode of a spring night, even before clearing the first shovelful of turf and gravel from his "living grave," he posted mentally the rule: "Keep on you own side of the fence," and the maxim, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." Adhering to these, as much as was possible in a fallible mortality, he had not only preserved an identity, but was on cheerful nodding, if not slap-you-on-the-back, terms with the little cluster of fellow burghers. They knew, indeed, how to take him, and he knew how to take them, which is the tacit secret of the pulse-beat of small places. This type of "taking" includes, primarily, a tactful "letting alone" clause, which makes it a sort of subrosa ethics worth cultivating in even pretentious precincts.

It follows then, naturally, that the poet made no reference next day to the alarm on his avenue. Lightly he moved about his accustomed duties to self and posterity, writing his morning's stint, cycling over the crusted and sandy knolls and along the companionable lake, or swinging at hammocked ease on his porch, reading, or weighing, airily or heavily, as the mood set his balances, the casual drippings of humanity that trickled down the road.

He was, indeed, at this last occupation when he heard the rattle of neighbor De Haas's rickety cart, and the easy salute effected in transit from screening bush to bush fell in marked degree below the settled and adopted standard of neighborliness. In fact, the basket maker looked to Hartley, in this glimpse through greenery, so preternaturally sober that he was tempted to fling out, "Good even, Deacon!" as accompaniment to his indolent wave of arm; but his angel of good taste conquered the satiric imp. So it hardly surprised him next morning, as curtly he edited the gossip of the postoffice, to gather that Mrs. De Haas had again flown zionward to the haven of the Great City; but it did perplex him somewhat that this time she had not been discovered, as usual, in the dwelling of her sister-in-law and brought back, moodily, with babe in arms, to the brood clamoring for "Ma!" in the frowsy home-nest. Apparently, after the many threats and essays, she had truly enough taken her life into her own hands.

An interval of three full days elapsed; then Mrs. De Haas, dropping from the home of an unsuspected relative a hint on her harborage, was brought back to her sphere of duty as soon as might be by the basket maker himself.

That same evening came a robust tap on Hartley's door.

The combative and peace-patched twain stood on the threshold. A little rilling whimper of sound gurgled from a shawled bundle. The visitors entered, exhaling a certain cheeriness.

"Ve saw your light in the vindow, neighbor, my goot vife here an' me, an' ve just thought ve'd stop in for a visit. Do not see too much of each otter, do ve?"

"I should say not!" responded Hartley. "Sit down, Neighbor De Haas, and have some cakes and social words with us, and a goblet or two of beady grape juice for chaser. You are looking fine, Mrs. De Haas. Put little Katharina on the couch in the corner. She'll be asleep, all snug enough, in a few minutes."

So conviviality ruled the hour. The poet would see to it that the last natural vestiges of strain between the new-joined couple were chafed airily away. How craftily he led these childishly impulsive adults backward over years!—what pictures of the meeting of them, the greeting of them, the loving of them, and the tempestuous courtship!—for the "temper" of Christine was no late culture, but part and

parcel of the original contract. "Not even her hard working German Vater could put up vit her," sighed Peter De Haas; and he twitched his chair closer to his wife and patted her plump neck affectionately. It was evident that this trait of "temper" was the potent fascination of her. Like a pair of young lovers they seemed in the shaded, placid lamplight. A becoming embarrassment lay oddly on both.

"Tinnie," said the basket maker, "do you know now once again that night, how ve gave slip to the Acrobat?"

Christine's eyes sparkled at the memory of the mischief of it. "It certainly was a clever one on Georges!" she bubbled.

"It was like this, neighbor," explained De Haas. "It vas two year after I come ofer this country, but I vas American all right, no greenie, you see; and I make baskets so vell I take prizes, an' only two in whole big town might beat me at it the trade. Vell, Tinnie did dancing at vaudevilles, an' t'ree nights in veek I see her home, an' t'ree nights this acrobat man Georges see her home, an' von night her Vater see her home, or she see herself home—can you tell? Vell, I grows twenty-von Sunday, an' I say, 'Tinnie, I starts my own shop; I am man; you marry me—Peter—an' I see you home all nights in veek!' An' Tinnie hops off an' says, 'Yes, Peter, I certainly *vould* be seen home all nights in veek! No, not for mine, Peter!' Yet ve keeps goot friends yet an' goes on just the same. But I t'ink on this snake man Georges an' soon I know not vat I t'ink. So it vent till I say to myself, 'Peter, you go four nights in veek an' take Tinnie home an den it vill swing right for you on true veights—ha, ha!' This I am t'inking ven I came toward home von late summer evenings ven it was hot an' fountain in park gave out a coolness there. An' there on bench sitting together once vas Tinnie an' Georges! They saw not me, an' I vent to the lilypond an' sat long on a big rock. A little bunch of red osier for vork-job at homes I let trail down beside me there in varm sop. Sudden it came ofer me all an' I tip, tippitoe in green shadow behind an' say soft, 'Keep still, lubber Eelman, an' you vill not get hurt.' For twisting a veave of osier I vas ofer his chest an' arms an' vorking dem snug all in back of slats—fine! An' Tinnie helped; she clapped hands ofer his mout' an' on him pressed. Den I knew mine vas proper ticket. Ve skiddooed, laughing to bust. Next day married ve vere—eh, Tinnie?"

"Sure, Peter; and how glad Pa was to give me away!"

"Oh, now, lady, you're too modest," commented Hartley, gallantly, as he passed the sugar-coated cakes and the innocuous beverage. "But it was well done, my bold Knight of Basketry; the lady was fairly won. Love, war, and work will whip the Turk! And now, tell me, how's business—and Socialism?"

"Ach!" shrugged De Haas. "Don't talk of basket making. These machines, they are running it all away, these days now. I haf notions I must take to the farming, yes, I must quit. Avake I lies t'inking it ofer half the night yet. But the Society of the Socialist—ah, that is the great hope, is it not? Yes, it is so!"

Hartley knew that the right chord had been struck. Enthusiasms vibrated deep in the thorax of his caller, who tossed off lightly the contents of his tumbler and set it down, with an appreciative little flourish, on the round-topped hickory table.

"The Society of the Socialist—ah, yes, my friend, that is the von hope now. Look round—vat a world as it is! Money, money, money, an' den more of it;—of vat?—MONEY!—noddings but money! Not till money is away done with vill there be any worth whiles life on this earth. But there must be big vars yet an' big smashings out. Den fighting vill no more be ofer monies, nor ofer religions, nor ofer lands; just only vill von trouble of man's be—lof, lof, lof! The old trouble vill be the new trouble, too; man's an' voman's—lof, lof, lof!"

The basket maker's tones ascended with unchecked vehemence, as he warmed with his thought, breezing a mimical, minute terror through cobweb festoons. Little Katharina stirred on the couch and woke with a wailing demand on maternity. Mrs. De Haas rose and drew on her shawl, her triumphant best one.

"It's time we were going," said she, taking up the infant.

De Haas watched her making light quick work of the wrappings. His eyes, like his voice, were mellow with feeling. He foraged, with a brusque tenderness, into an area of compliment.

"Tinnie!" he exclaimed, "damn you, Tinnie, but I lof you! You are the von for me—Peter. Yes, we must be goings now."

From his doorway the poet-host lighted their footing to the gravel. Off they went into shadows, laughing lightly, like pleased children.

Next day a storm kept Hartley at home. He was up at dawn to witness a brief reddish sun glow, before fell the settled gray; he had watched the sky speculatively while dressing and eating, hoping for a semi-clear afternoon at least; then he had forgotton it all in his "work," as he still elected to call the spinning of verses, despite the wide stock of synonyms and tart epithets supplied gratis to him by the jocular villagers for variation of his dignified term. So now, at high meridian of this sunless day, his clock and a healthy appetite being precise monitors, he had but turned from his desk to his saucepans, when fell a timid tap on the door and he opened to the silent form of Alberta. Plainly enough, she was flustered.

"Why, Berta, what's the matter?" he asked, solicitously.

"Everything!" cried Alberta. "This time it's Pa that's run off! He bolted last night while we were sleeping,—or, maybe, early this morning. Did you see him passing, Mr. Hartley?"

"No, I saw nothing this morning but soaky weather. But it was all made up again, I thought. Believe me, Berta, they were Mr. and Mrs. T. Dove of Billington Terrace when they left me for the feathered home-cot after the little visit. Now, what could have——"

"Too much Bill Anders," said Alberta, bluntly sententious. "He called while they were away, and I couldn't shake him. Then they came, and——Oh, come, Mr. Hartley; come over to the house with me now and talk to Ma. She's all nervous. Tell her what to do."

"All right," responded the poet, slipping into his coat. Together they hurried to the old weather-tarnished, heavy-set house up the road.

Mrs. De Haas was in the dooryard to receive them. If her nerves had been aquiver, as Alberta stated, the sturdy little flaxen-haired woman had had time to grip them in admirable control. She greeted Hartley with a smile and a half-humorous, half-impatient gesture.

"Ah, that man of mine," she began, "who would have thought he had——"

She left the sentence to complete its own destiny, for rounding the curve of the road rumbled sloshily through new-made mud a teamster's wagon, the familiar vehicle of "Farmer" Anders, he who toyed with the art of truck farming at the edge of things, but whose chief "holt" on the slippery bread-and-butter problem was from an interest in a teaming business of moderate proportions.

Anders waved airily to the group and pulled up his pair of glossy-coated bays at the swung gate.

"Sorry," called the teamster from his seat to Mrs. De Haas, "but of course I had rights to a friendly call. How are we all this morning? Is Old Grumpy still grumping?"

"Just what's the matter, Bill," hastened to explain Mrs. De Haas. "Peter is gone; and he such a stay-at-home, too,—'specially in sulks. After the rumpus, I went to bed, and Peter stamped out. This morning I looked to see him in the field; no, not there; nor in the shop, neither."

"Perhaps he's at Zukowski's? I'll stop for a beer in passing."

"No, Bill; it's away to the city he's gone this time—just like me." She volunteered the wisp of a smile. "But you might make questions here and there; and perhaps you would drop the basket for old Mr. Marvis?" There was a hint of wheedle in her voice.

"Yes, surely," consented Anders,—"for a quarter."

"Oh, come now, Bill; it's right on your way."

"Yes," repeated the teamster,—"for a quarter."

"Well, then, you can charge it up to us. Come now into the shop."

Anders shrugged, winked at Hartley, and descended stolidly from his wagon. Together they entered the cellar shop of the basket maker. Two cur dogs sniffed at Hartley's heels. A little bunch of peak-faced, tattered children brushed in.

The embracing eye of the poet took in the litter at a glance, sweeping in the curious circuit. It noted the earthen pots for dyes and the simple implements of the trade on floor and bench; the knife for splicing the reed, drills for boring, a maul, leads for steadying, pruning shears, plier, measuring stick, and the rest. Reeds still were in soak in the galvanized tub; and bundles of the various basket willows and osiers most in call, together with odd remnants of rattan, raffia, and rush, were piled in corners of the apartment or leaned against the walls of the length and breadth of it. The artistry of some of the completed and newly dyed work charmed Hartley, notably the dainty fern dishes of natural reed spokes and weavers of light brown, the sturdy jardinieres of brown and olive green with plaited borders, the oblong and the oval serving trays and the shapely fruit-basket trays; the variety and oddity of certain of the utility baskets and scrap baskets of braided rush caught him, as did the long-handled hanging baskets, bowl shaped, with flared tops and bodies of double weaving; but not long was he behind the others in fixing on the direct objective for this little crush of folk amid squalor and dampness. Yes, the hamper for the Bowersville eccentric was truly an order wrought out and fulfilled with a freedom of freakish zest highly creditable to the contract. There it stood, or hung, rather, from the heavy beam, extending its extreme stretched length of deep brown-red wicker all but to the floor. Freshly dyed it was; it was a king of baskets, dominant, resplendent, serpentine, magnetic. The plaited crown was artistically fitted to it, and even the price tag had been adjusted and plainly marked for the benefit of its purchaser's dimming eyesight—and, perhaps, memory.

With no checks for ceremony, Bill Anders swept clean the little workbench of most of its tools and dumped the rest. As he pulled it across the room to the basket, one of the dogs snapped at him viciously.

"Cut it out, Caesar!" cried he, kicking the animal into a corner, among dye-pots. "Looks as if Grumps wanted to keep it after all. Look at these knots! Someone hand me a knife."

Mrs. De Haas picked up a sizable one from the floor and handed it to him, where he stood on the bench fingering ropes.

The keen blade made short work of it. The big trailing basket swayed and toppled to the hard earth-floor, eluding the several clutches. It was heavily weighted. The cover, bounding off, revealed the drawn and discolored face and the limp, huddled shoulders of the missing basket maker. The stout bull neck was looped in frazzled rope.

The gazers shifted silently or stood as dazed. There stirred but one coherent, vital voice. Little tow-headed Herman piped, "It's Pa!"

Even this brought the relief. Anders recovered from his stupor, and he and Hartley soon stripped the body of its strange gear, drawing it forth from the basket as they might have separated a mummy from its painted case.

"There's a note," observed Hartley. He unpinned it from the soiled workday vest.

"Read it, Mr. Hartley," said the new widow. "O, Peter! Peter!—he has really done it!"

It was a terse but characteristic scrawl that Hartley read off to them. "Dear Ones: This way of it is a right way. Love all and a good-by. Tinnie, see that old Mr. Marvis gets his basket on time prompt. Peter."

"That I will, Peter! Bill, take it along now—and get along yourself, quick. Mr. Hartley, you will telephone for us, won't you?"

The little woman stooped over the gruesome figure and sighed gently. Then she rose, with a firm briskness of movement and demeanor.

"Always Peter was the one for the queer notion," she said. "Berta, come; we'll lay him out on the table."

THE FIRE BUG

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

When D. Dacres tries a case in the criminal court, there is likely to be a dramatic moment or two. This time, Gertie Gilfoil, soubrette law clerk, brings the most important of the "props" in an old suit case and gets in some effective work backstage.

I KNOWED Longstreet was up against it from the start. They had the goods on him all right. For one thing I knowed Fox's way of doin' things. Fox is one of these here chaps that you hear about but nobody ever sees. But when Fox stretches out that little paw of his,—manicured to the limit,—and puts it on somebody's shoulder, you know he's got his man.

He watched and he waited for Longstreet, and for months he didn't know who it was he was lookin' for. But he got him in the end.

For Jean Longstreet was the fire bug who set twenty, maybe thirty, fires right here in our town. Three of these fires me and Joe Gish run to our own selves.

Joe Gish is the manager of Black & Greenstein's just across the hall from us, and maybe I've told you that I'm Gertie Gilfoil, lady manager of D. Dacres's office.

As Joe says, a lady is only a lady, but a fire is a fire, you know. The first fire we run to was a wonder,—down a back alley, well under way before the department heard of it. The fact is, Joe and me pulled the alarm and was on the spot before anybody else. It was a factory and the girls and men was pouring out like rats. It seemed to us they all got out before the chemical got there, and yet, it was just as the chemical rounded the corner, that Joe Gish caught me by the arm.

"Look there," he says.

And I looked. And there, up above the fifth story somewhere in the smoke, there was a man crawling along a ledge,—crawling without anything to hold on by, and with somethin' in his arms. This somethin' was a girl that had got cornered somehow up there and couldn't get out, and this here chap got her to a fire escape and brought her down. What became of them after they reached the second story Joe and me never figured out, for the department was out in full force now and the cop swept us away out of the lines, so we had to run for it; and when we looked up again the man and the girl was gone.

Well, that was a big fire, and Jean Longstreet set that fire. Don't ask me how they found out. Fox found out, that's all.

The next fire that we run to,—me and Joe Gish,—Longstreet set that, too; and in the third one they caught him red-handed. It seems he went into a cellar and built a fire in his own particular way, and he was seen in there and was seen to set the fire. He waited there until it got goin' good, and then he saunters out, shuts the cellar door and walks down the street.

Two hours later Lieutenant Fox finds Longstreet working at his job,—he was a chimney builder, so it seems,—and pinches Longstreet's ears with them polished finger nails of his and whispers to him quiet.

"Jean," he says, "you come with me."

Jean jumped at the chance, they say. "Sure," says Jean to Fox. "Where to, officer,—another fire?" And he goes on quiet as a lamb.

And as I says, every one of the twenty or thirty fires was built in the same way that Longstreet built the last one. So they caught him at last, the bug they'd been lookin' for for seven months.

Of course it made a story a mile long in the newspapers; and of course they indicted Longstreet right away; and Fred Stanton, the prosecutor, set an early date for trial, for the public was up on its hind

legs howling, and the fire department wanted Longstreet's hide. So did the insurance companies.

They indicted him for every fire; and one of the cases was a case of arson in the first degree, if you know what that means. It means setting fire to a dwellin' house in the night time when there's human beings inside. It means murder, that's what it means, and sometimes it gets the limit,—the rope or the chair.

Longstreet was up against it for fair. Joe and me went up to see him arraigned for trial. It was about noon. Joe and me takes lunch on and off most every day,—his treat one day, mine the next. When we got through we went up to the court house. We squeezed in the court room as best we could, for it was packed to the limit, chiefly with a lot of firemen, insurance clerks and such; and there was a file of prisoners waiting down one alley with their heads showin' up above the fence.

"Can you pick out Longstreet?" says Joe.

"I bet I can," I says.

I know these here degenerates when I see 'em; and Joe and me picked the same man,—a little rat with hair coming down in his eyes, no forehead to speak of, and you know the kind of ears.

It's funny, that long alley of criminals. I'll swear if half of 'em ain't better lookin' than most of the counselors in court, and there was one young chap at the end of the line who was a wonder. I wouldn't want Joe Gish to look no better than that chap.

Well, the little rat come up for pleadin'; and Joe and me pressed forward; so did everybody just around us, for they heard us say that that chap was Longstreet. And what do you think? The little chap was just an ordinary drunk,—habitual maybe, or somethin' that had fetched him up to Sessions,—so we had another guess comin'.

"Come inside the rail," said Joe.

So we pressed inside the rail and Joe and me nails an officer.

"When is this here Longstreet comin' up to plead?" asks Joe.

The officer shakes his head. "Dunno," he answers. "Maybe not till four o'clock this afternoon, maybe not to-day at all."

Joe ducks. "Hey, Gertie," he says, "there's Greenstein, my boss, across the room. What am I up here for?" He fumbles in his pocket to find some papers to file or somethin' or other.

"But don't you go yet, Joe," I says. "There's somethin' that I want to see."

"Some lady law clerk stuff, I suppose," says Joe. But he was game and so we waits.

Well, there's nobody like Van Blarcom, J. to clean up a line of pleaders. In about ten minutes he has that line all trimmed and assigns counsel for every one of 'em that ain't already got a lawyer and that's goin' to fight. That is, he has it *almost* trimmed. Then he raps up his gavel.

"Clear the court room, officers," he says. "Clear out everybody but the counselors."

Me and Joe, being counselors, stayed in. The rest of the gang had to go, even the firemen and the insurance clerks.

"Jean Longstreet," says the clerk.

And then a chap steps forward,—and will you believe me,—he's that fine lookin' chap at the tail end of the line. He was as clean a lookin' proposition as you could see. He's got a fine white forehead and a fine brown face where the sun strikes him every day at work, and he's got a pair of steady eyes, and there ain't no sign of rum or nothing else about him; he even wears a sort of flowing black tie the same as artists does.

Joe Gish kind of jumps when this chap steps forward, and then he looks at me and gives me the cold eye.

"So this is what you was waitin' for, lady law clerk," he says. "Well, you got yours all right. Your angel child's a fire bug, Gertie Gilfoil."

Longstreet hasn't any counsel, and the clerk has to read the indictments to him. He listens to him easy like and the judge asks him how he pleads.

"Not guilty," he says. "I don't know anything about it."

Van Blarcom, J. looks around the court room. He turns back to Longstreet.

"Have you got counsel?" he says.

Longstreet shakes his head. "I don't know anything about counsel," he says, "and I ain't got no money. There's nothing to these charges," he says. "I don't

need counsel. I'm not guilty and I'll prove it," he says.

The judge looks around again. "Mr. Stores," he says, "I'll assign you to this case."

Stores was one of the biggest Session lawyers in our burg. Stores looks like somebody has hit him a jolt under the ear. He worms himself through the crowd up to the judge's bench and whispers somethin'. I found out later what it was. The judge nods and looks around again.

"Mr. Greenstein," he says, "I'll assign *you* to this case."

"Your honor," says Greenstein, going back at Van Blarcom like a shot, "I'm on the verge of breakin' down from over work. My physician has threatened me with all these different kinds of germs, if I don't quit for awhile. I couldn't take up nothing new for six weeks anyhow."

The judge looks at Greenstein. Greenstein's got health sticking out of him at every pore; but he never flinches, so the judge turns to somebody else.

"Mr. Jones," says he, "will you take this case?"

Jones, it seems, couldn't, because he's just been retained in a line of Federal cases that nobody had ever heard of.

"How about you, Mr. Smith?" says Van Blarcom.

Smith blurts out that he couldn't conscientiously defend the man.

That came pretty near the whole truth. The Longstreet case was a nasty case to handle. There was no glory in it; there was nothing but a kind o' undesirable disgrace that was sticky, to say the least.

Van Blarcom didn't press the point that day with anybody. He could have assigned any counsel, if he wanted to, and *made* him act.

"Take Longstreet down stairs," he says. "I'll assign him counsel in a day or two."

He called in two or three men the next day and had private confabs with them. Every one of 'em side stepped. He even called in Stores again, Stores being the man who had whispered to him that he wouldn't touch the case with a ten foot pole.

"I'll *make* you try it, Stores," he says.

"You make me try it," says Stores, "and I'll denounce this man in open court to the jury. I'll help the state convict him."

Van Blarcom, J. was at his wit's end. The case was important; and of all men in the world, Longstreet, since he had to go down the line, needed a fair trial.

As luck would have it, me and D. Dacres was in court next day when Van Blarcom come on the bench. It was after recess and it was the day after Longstreet had pleaded. D. Dacres had a small probation case she wanted to talk to Van Blarcom, J. about. While he is in listenin' to her I see somethin' come into his eyes.

"Counselor Dacres," he says to her, "I've assigned a case to you,—the State against Longstreet."

There was kind of a titter in the court room. I heard it but D. Dacres didn't. She didn't seem to know what she was up against.

"Thank you, your Honor," said D. Dacres. "I'll be glad to take the case."

When we gets out of the court house, Dacres signals for a car. "Come on, Gilfoil," she says to me, "I'm goin' to the county jail."

So we goes up there and we sees Longstreet. Dacres gives a kind of gulp when she sits down at the table across the way from him.

"Why," she says, "you ain't no fire bug—you certainly don't look like one."

Longstreet nods and kind of smiles. "They got me charged," he says, "with setting a lot of fires here in town. I don't know nothing about it," he says. "I'm not guilty,—I wasn't there. They can't prove nothing on me."

D. Dacres actually shakes hands with him. "I believe you," she says, "and I'll defend you to the limit. Now tell me your story."

"Bless you," he says, "I got no story to tell. I was workin' on Simon's chimney over on the meadows, and up comes Fox and pulls me. That's all I know."

"Well," said D. Dacres, "have you got any witnesses who can tell where you were these times when they claim you set the fires?"

"I don't need none," says Longstreet,

"they can't prove it was me, that's all."

"I'll be up to-morrow," said Dacres, "and we will have another talk."

We went back to the prosecutor's office and asked him what they had. They showed us about forty statements of as many witnesses.

"And besides that," they said to us, "you go and see Galbraith."

Galbraith was the chief of the fire department. We saw Galbraith, and Galbraith put us wise to a whole lot more.

"This thing's got me," says D. Dacres. "Come on, Gilfoil, let's go back."

We goes back to our office,—Dacres's an' mine; and there, waitin' for us, is two women. Joe Gish is there, too, just to tell me he didn't think we'd take the leavings of the bar.

"Huh," I says to Joe Gish, "what do you think we're in this case for? We're goin' to get this chap Longstreet off."

D. Dacres, though, is busy with the two women. She takes 'em into her private office and she calls me in. One of the women is a pretty, young little thing, just about my size and looks and with a heap of trouble in her eyes. The other is older, but with a lot of trouble, too. The older one speaks first.

"They tell me," she says to D. Dacres, "that you're Jean Longstreet's lawyer. Funny," she goes on, "that they hire a woman lawyer for him. Ain't there no men lawyers to defend him?"

"Why," says D. Dacres, "he said he had no money and couldn't hire a lawyer, and Judge Van Blarcom assigns me to defend him."

She didn't want to tell the woman that the regular staff didn't like the case.

"Well," says the younger woman, "you won't have no trouble in gettin' him off, I can tell you that."

"That's what I want to know," said D. Dacres. "I want to show he ain't guilty."

"We can easy show that," they says.

"We must show it," says D. Dacres. "We got to show that he didn't set those fires—"

"Oh," they both says, "Jean set the fires all right; he did that."

I thought D. Dacres would've dropped through the floor. "He set the fires!" she exclaimed. "Why then he's guilty on your own say-so and I don't want to try the case. Who are you, anyway?" she says.

The young one, so it seems, was Longstreet's wife, and the older was his aunt.

"He set the fires," says his aunt, quiet like, "only he didn't mean to do it."

"How didn't he mean to do it?" asks D. Dacres.

"If there's anything he hates it's fires," they goes on.

D. Dacres looks at me, and I looks at D. Dacres.

"How do you know," she asks 'em sudden like, "how you know he sets fires?"

The women looks at each other and then they leans over D. Dacres's desk.

"We see him do it," they whispered.

Dacres nods to me. "Gilfoil," she says, "you go out in your own suite of rooms and lock the door behind you. I'll ferret this thing out."

Maybe I told you that my suite is the outside suite. It's made up of two rooms; one room is on one side of a gate, and the other room is on the other side; so that you can see quite plain from one room into the other. The air is just the same, so is the view. Maybe I haven't told you of the up-to-date system that I installed in Dacres's office. It is a system that consists of a hole in the wall. The wall is between Dacres's office and my own. The hole goes out somewhere on Dacres's book shelves in her private room and comes out underneath a calendar in my suite. By applyin' the right eye to this hole the right eye is enabled, as D. Dacres would say if she knew about it, to see into Dacres's private room. By applyin' the left eye the result is the same. By applyin' the right ear you can hear with the right and ditto with the left.

This system being usually in fine workin' order, I puts it into practice. Strange to say, however, the system only half works, for them three people at D. Dacres's desk has moved over to the window and D. Dacres won't let the women talk any louder than a whisper. Joe Gish comes over and I covers up the system pretty quick. Joe don't know about this system. I may want to ring it on him some day.

"Well," says Joe, laughing in his sleeve,

"how are you gettin' on with Longstreet?"

"We're goin' to get him off," I says.

"I see," he says, "you got your witnesses inside. Two witnesses against forty of the state's."

While he's hangin' around out comes the two women and out comes Dacres.

"Gilfoil," she says, "I'll be back at four o'clock."

At four o'clock there's a machine drives up and three people comes out. One is Dacres and the other two is doctors. They goes into the office and locks themselves in again. This time the system works fine. One of them, Doc Pierce, the biggest man in town, only shakes his head.

"It's a close case," he says, "too close for me. If we testify we'll have every specialist in town against us. The trouble is," he says, "the man knows the difference between right and wrong,—that is, I'm pretty sure he does."

The other man was Freeman from the asylum. Dacres appeals to him.

"Doc," she says, "I ain't got another leg to stand on. If I can't get this man off because he's crazy, I can't get him off at all, and if I can't get you I might as well throw up my hands."

Freeman shakes his head. "The profession would mob me if I swore this man was crazy, I'm afraid," he says. "You try somebody else. I think," he says, "the man knows the difference between right and wrong—"

"If we can only get him talkin' about fires," says Dacres.

The doctors shake their heads."No use," they said. "We'll make another examination if you say so, but no jury will ever find this man insane."

After Dacres comes out she tells me what she is tryin' to do,—to prove Longstreet crazy on the subject of fires.

"The trouble is, Gilfoil," she says, "I've got nothing but the word of two poor women, but I got to put it to the test." She takes me sudden by the shoulder. "Gilfoil," she says, "we've got to win this case, and there's only one way to win it. You got to help me and help me hard."

Believe me, this time I worked with Joe Gish. Him an' I went to the newspaper office and I got out every file of papers for the last five years, and what is more I read 'em through. When I finished I went up to the prosecutor's office and saw the clerk of Sessions.

"Jimmy," I says, "I want sixty-five subpoenas."

"What for," he says, "what are you goin' to do?"

"They're for the Longstreet case," I says. "We're goin' to beat Fred Stanton."

"Go as far as you like," he says. "The prosecutor usually has got the goods."

"Well, believe me, even then I didn't know what Dacres was drivin' at. There was things she wouldn't tell even to herself, and this was one of them. I knowed she was good as gold, and followed my instructions, that was all.

It would take a week to tell you what we did before that trial come off. Three days before the trial we had every last subpoena served. Then came the deluge. All kinds of people from all over the town rung us up on the wire. All kinds of people come to our office. There was millionaires among them; there was shop girls among them.

"What do you want of us?" says they.

They got one answer mostly. It was me that gave that answer. "Do you see them words on that subpoena," I told 'em each and all. "'Hereof fail not under penalty of two hundred dollars and whatever damages may fall thereon.'"

It was all the satisfaction I could give 'em. On the day before the trial there was a woman come in a closed limousine. She hustled up to Dacres's office with plenty of wrath in her eye, believe me.

"I'm Judge Van Blarcom's cousin," she said, "and this paper with your name on it was served on me. I want to know just what it means."

D. Dacres turned her over superciliouslike to me.

"Gilfoil," she says, "tell the lady that she must be there."

Next day the lady was nowhere to be seen, at least not in the court; but I nosed about and found that she was in the Judge's private chambers, mad as a red herring, waiting there to be called.

Van Blarcom, J. even spoke to Dacres about his cousin, but Dacres wouldn't tell him. She simply said the woman would have to testify to what she knew, and if she didn't show up, she, Dacres, would apply to the Judge for an order for contempt. Van Blarcom said all right and motioned the prosecutor to go ahead.

The prosecutor started in, but he didn't get very far. D. Dacres forestalled him by admitting, right off the reel, that the defendant had set most of the fires.

"Then," says Fred Stanton, "your man changes his plea to a plea of guilty."

"No, he don't," said Dacres, "he don't do that."

"Well," said Stanton, "I'd like to prove my case."

Van Blarcom shook his head. "There's no use, prosecutor," he says, "in makin' the thing too spectacular; we don't want any demonstration here. If the prisoner admits settin' those fires, I take it that the state has proved its case. The defense may proceed."

D. Dacres looked around the court room for a moment. I was lookin' around, too, and I figured out that they was all there, high and low, great and small, except just one of 'em.

"I'll call," says D. Dacres suddenly, "I'll call Mrs. Parkmore Davis."

Now by this time, believe me, I was not sittin' anywhere near D. Dacres. I was on a back row seat opening a dress suit case and takin' a strangle hold of somethin' that I had inside of the case. A door to the left of the Judge's opens, and the Judge's cousin, the woman in furs, comes in. The judge gets up and hands her around behind the desk. She stands up while she is sworn and then sits down.

"Mr. Longstreet," said Dacres to the prisoner who was sitting at her side, "will you please rise."

The prisoner got up and then Dacres, stepping suddenly to one side, raised an arm.

Then like a flash, while everyone was leaning forward listening, there comes a clang, clang, clang of the fire bell. Three times it rang, that gong. I know it well, because I rang it. It was in an open suit case underneath my seat. Then there was a pause and then five more times it rang.

The prisoner starts as if he's shot. Like a flash he turns,—I was watchin' him and so was everybody else,—and starts down the aisle.

"Three-five," he yells. "I know just where it is. Fire, fire! Let me out," he yells.

Well, by that time, of course, they had him. He struggled like a mad man. He was tall and powerful and kept his feet; and everybody in the court room saw him, watched his face. Suddenly he stopped strugglin'.

"Don't maul me, boys," he said, "don't maim me. You make a big mistake. I'm needed there,—I got to go. Three-five, I know just where it is."

However, they overpowered him and he sank into a seat. The Judge was rapping loudly with his gavel inquirin' from whence had come that clangin' of the gong.

There was a sudden lull. In the midst of it a girl stood up in the middle of the audience and says quite loud and clear:

"Why, he's the chap that saved my life."

And then for the first time I saw the drift of things. Another girl over in a corner started up.

"He saved mine, too," she said.

The Judge rapped loudly with his gavel. He was tellin' them to clear the court.

Suddenly Mrs. Parkmore Davis rose all atremble from her seat and clutched Van Blarcom by the arm. With one hand she was pointin' toward Jean Longstreet. The Judge listens for a moment and his very act of listening stops the noise. He gets up and leads Mrs. Parkmore Davis once more to her seat and nods to D. Dacres.

"Proceed," he says.

"Mrs. Davis," went on Dacres, "have you ever seen the prisoner before?"

"Yes," says Mrs. Parkmore Davis, visibly excited, "once before."

"How long ago?" asks Dacres.

"Five years ago," returns the witness.

"What was the occasion, Mrs. Davis?" says D. Dacres.

"The occasion," answers the witness, "was a fire at my house here in town."

"Now, Mrs. Davis," went on D. Dacres,

"will you tell the jury who set that fire?"

"I did myself," answers the witness. And then she adds, "accidently, of course. I had an alcohol lamp. I overturned it. It was at night. It was in my dressing room. The curtains caught fire and the whole room was ablaze in a half a minute. I was alone in the house. I opened a window and screamed. A man was passin'. In fact he was the only man in sight. He scrambled up the porch and got me out somehow, got me safely to the ground—"

D. Dacres referred to a clipping from a daily paper.

"Now," she says, "Mrs. Davis, what happened after that?"

The witness kind of flushes. "I remember callin' for my jewel case," she said, "and I remember the man climbin' up again and I remember his slidin' off the porch somehow head foremost to the ground."

"What next?" asks D. Dacres.

"Then I fainted," says the woman, "and when I woke up the man was gone."

"Did you get your jewels?" asks Dacres.

"I did," says Mrs. Davis.

"Who, then, was the man?"

Mrs. Parkmore Davis points again to Longstreet. "There he sits," she says.

Now maybe you see the drift. Dacres calls Galbraith, chief of the fire department. She calls a dozen firemen, the same men that the state would have called. She calls the Salvage Corps and fire insurance men—and she proves by them, one by one, that for the last five years Longstreet is at most every fire; always with a fire badge that he stole somewhere; always in the way; always tryin' to save somethin' or somebody, and usually on the job before the department gets there.

She calls half a dozen girls that Longstreet has carried down through the smoke and sometimes flame (this all come by our lookin' through the newspaper files, you see); and they don't none of 'em forget him, because he is big and fine and handsome and besides he saved their lives; and then she puts on Longstreet's little woman and his aunt.

And they tell the story; how he comes home one day about five years ago, gaunt as a wolf, lean and hungry as a wolf, sayin' nothin' as to where he's been; how he won't go to work at times; how he sits day after day for days at a time just listenin'; how he keeps tellin' them over and over again for days at a time that he didn't get no chance; that he was a great life saver and a great fire fighter and always on the job, but he didn't get no chance. And meantime it seemed as how he would forget and go back to buildin' chimneys, and everything would be all right until a fire bell rang; then off he'd go again; then they watched him once and saw him light a fire, just so he could put it out.

That was his game, that was the whole story. He hated fire as he hated death and so he lit it just to put it out; he brought it into life just to kill it. That's what the chief could never understand; that's what I didn't understand; but that's what D. Dacres saw at a glance, and that's what she proved without the aid of experts. She had the experts there (I subpoenaed 'em); but she didn't use 'em.

Doc Sherman of the lunatic asylum was sittin' inside the rail next to Doc Pierce.

"Doctor Pierce," says Dacres, quite clear and bold, "if you'll remove the clot of blood that this man has got inside his brain when he came down head first on the ground with Mrs. Parkmore Davis's jewels and will then turn him over to Doctor Sherman at your side, I think Doctor Sherman will let him go home."

She turns back to the jury.

"Gents," she says, quiet like, "I think if you'll let Doctors Pierce and Sherman handle this here case they'll find this man not guilty, just like you're doin' now."

When it was all over I steps up to Chief Galbraith with a dress suit case in my hand.

"Chief," I says, "here's a bran' new gong we bought and we'll sell it to the city cheap."

The chief grins. "So it was you," he says, "put that thing over on us."

"Simply followin' orders," I tells him. "But at that I didn't even know what number it was I pulled."

The chief grins again. "It was the nearest box to Jean Longstreet's house," he says. "He set his own house on fire three times," he says, "and he just simply had to get there for the fourth."

THE HEAD OF CROMWELL

BY VINCENT STARRETT

Being a complete and hitherto unpublished account of the posthumous adventures of the head of Cromwell. It is quite as important if not so exhaustive as the famous "Theory of Tittlebats" and should be carefully preserved by all "Questions and Answers" editors.

Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.—*Sir Thomas Browne.*

N a ferocious night toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, a sodden roisterer, returning obliquely to the sombre sanctuary of his lodgings, was struck suddenly sober by a shocking occurrence.

For two days a great tempest had blown over Southern England. Under the black sky, London, frescoed in dirty white, appeared a funereal labyrinth in a monstrous dream, through whose bleak thoroughfares the gale alternately shrieked and whined. The snow whirled in irregular gusts, or fell in great, wet flakes that became turbulent rivulets in the gutters. The hour was that darkest one before the cold dawn.

The gentleman walked irregularly and profanely, involving his limbs on occasion with his long, straight sword. Although he muttered constantly, as to a companion, his isolation was profound. His cloak hung limply from his shoulders; the soggy brim of his curled hat dripped heavily into his bosom.

Westminster Hall bulked above him when, of a sudden, as the tempest swirled, something large and round and hard dropped at his feet with a crash, and bounded toward the street. He greeted the diversion with a giggle of apprehensive joy and took after it. Then, as he plucked it from the swimming gutter, he uttered a scream of terror and hurled the object from him in frantic haste. He staggered back across the pavement, shuddering, and buried a haggard face in his wet arms, against the wall of the flanking building.

His further adventures of the night are unrecorded.

But almost as the globular object struck the pavement again, a second furious gust caught it amidships, trundled it in limping fashion for a few feet, and then swept it away like a possessed football down the back street.

The sentinel on duty at Westminster Hall, with praiseworthy caution, made no investigation of the shriek he had heard for half an hour, at the end of which period he was reassured at finding no evidence of a tragedy. He was enabled to report an uneventful night.

The following morning a shivering tradesman, taking down his shutters on the outskirts of the city, was horrified to see a human skull come bounding toward him over the cobbles. He yelled and bolted inside, with little excuse; but turned and watched the phenomenon with bugged eyes through a chink of his undone shutters. Speechless after his first vociferation, he saw the object of his alarm dash into a post before his door, turn sharply at the encounter and spin merrily away along the walk, headed for the open country.

The same morning, an hour or two later, the sentry then on duty at Westminster Hall had a shock on his own account. For no particular reason he glanced upward to where three poles reared at the top of the Hall. He immediately dropped his eyes, rubbed them vigorously and looked again. It was incredible, but there could be no doubt. The skulls of John Bradshaw and Henry Ireton still looked with sightless eyes over London, but the central pole was bare to its tip.

The head of Oliver Cromwell was missing.

The incumbent Defender of the Faith, at the moment, was James Stuart, historically registered as James II. Being a Stuart and mindful, perhaps (although the assumption may well be unjustified), of the severed head of one Charles Stuart, he issued a proclamation at once demanding the immediate restoration of the vanished relic.

Two men might have given information of value; and both, for the same reason, did not come forward. One was the first sentinel, who confessed on his deathbed to having heard the head shriek as it fell; the other was the affrighted tradesman, who feared unpleasant consequences might follow his admission that he had failed to arrest the speeding skull. So that, in the end, James Stuart abdicated and died without having further insulted the memory of his decapitated ancestor's executioner.

At the moment of issuing the proclamation, indeed, there was none who could have returned the head to its unlawful owners, for the rather battered skull was resting, peacefully enough for the nonce, in a fence corner many miles removed from its point of departure.

As the storms continued, however, it moved on, ever seeking pastures new, until the deep snows of the country ditches buried it coldly for the winter.

In the spring of the year, when the snows had melted in the lanes and valleys, a waggoner, toiling down an incline, stopped his horses at the foot and drew from his pocket a flask of life-giving fluid. He tilted his head back and poured the amber liquid into a cavernous aperture just beneath his rubicund nose, gurgling meanwhile in a manner indicating profound satisfaction, after which he sighed ecstatically and replaced the container in his garments; but as he gathered up the reins to depart a curious sight engaged his eye.

"Mos' peculiar shtone," he observed with lazy curiosity. "Sheems to hav' a nail druv throo it."

He clambered heavily from his perch, and, laying hold of the object, endeavored to raise it. It resisted his efforts, being frozen firmly into the earth. Only his indignation at its resistance caused him to persevere. When he had brought a huge knife into play and loosened the clay that held it, he managed to kick it free. It was singularly light for a stone, and when he had dug away some of the accumulated earth and filth he saw what it was.

To say that he dropped it hurriedly is only to be exact; still an unusual fascination held him to the spot. He stared down at it, as it lay at his feet, and whistled a stave of "Lillibullero."

"Well, I'll be dummed!" he observed at length. Then, as an idea crept into his sluggish brain, he added, "Right here was where them highwaymen worked las' fall. They killed old Simcoe in this very holler. 'Tis the day of resurrection, b' God! But what fur is the nail in his skull?"

Puzzled and vaguely perturbed, he picked it up in gingerly fashion; then, with an oath, he threw it into his wagon and climbed back to his seat. The cart rattled across the flat and the husky animals toiled up the further incline. But at the top a strange thing happened.

The vehicle lurched into a hollow and came up with a groan, and, at once, as on a signal, the head of Cromwell described a slight and graceful parabola and dropped into the roadway. Being at the top of a hill it had a decided advantage, and it gathered speed as it rolled downward. But it was not to escape without a chase, for the driver looked back to observe his fragment of passenger at the instant the skull leaped into the road.

Then might have been witnessed the amusing spectacle of an enormously fat man galloping wildly down hill in pursuit of an object of about the dimensions of a small plum pudding, which rolled over and over, with many bumps and bounds, at an astonishing rate of speed.

Half way down the fat man halted, blown, and with red face and staring eyes watched the subsequent career of the itinerant head. Slightly impeded by the protruding spike, which gave it a ludicrous limp even on the flat, the distin-

guished cranium fled the length of the incline without pause. It even attempted to climb the upgrade on its own momentum, but, failing miserably, toppled over the edge at the side, crashed through a network of bare-limbed bushes and plunged, swifter than the flight of a diving bird, toward the river below. Only two bounds intervened between the hillside and the water. The first carried it out of the sight of the perspiring watcher.

"Dum!" said the fat man, in adipose exasperation. "Whut sh'll I tell to the margistrate *now?*"

In the end he told him nothing. At the moment he trudged back up the hill, gathered up his reins and disappeared over the brow and out of the chronicle.

The second bound of the bewitched skull carried it to the marge of the river, where a small boy sat fishing. He was a healthy youngster, and he dabbled his toes idly in the stream, although with little sound, as he fished. The tangle of vines and bush behind him was astir with the coming of summer; the sun beat hotly on his head. A waterbird called harshly across the stream, and he imitated its note without difficulty. It was one of the best things he did.

Suddenly there was a crashing of boughs behind. Something rushed down the bank and thudded at his side, and there followed a splash at his feet.

The vagabond scrambled upright in alarm. He looked into the stream at the bank's edge and his mouth opened and closed mutely, twice. He gave a perfect imitation of a fish that gasped on the sunny bank where he had placed it some moments before. Then, with a shrill cry, he dropped his gnarled pole and incontinently fled along the river path as if an evil spirit were at his heels.

Meanwhile the head of Cromwell bobbed easily in the weeds at the edge of the water, turning over occasionally as a swell caught it, but for the most part resting face downward by reason of the weight of the rusted spike that protruded from the frontal structure.

After a time a dimensive breeze sprang up and ruffled the quiet surface. The skull jerked grotesquely for a few moments, dancing solemnly with the swaying wavelets, bumped smartly against the shoreline and, with this slight impetus, pushed out to sea. It rode the waves carelessly, but without any diminution of a certain arrogance that it seemed to carry with it, and in a short time was leisurely bobbing its way down the stream toward Clove.

Mr. Andrew Glasscock, able seaman, retired, and fisherman extraordinary, sauntered out of the "Whistling Dick" public house in Clove, just in time to be severely bumped by a running boy, barefooted and pop-eyed, who seemed bent on getting somewhere in a hurry. Mr. Glasscock's serenity and dignity were vastly upset by the collision. His jaw set rigidly and his pigtail stuck out straight behind. One horny hand, meanwhile, gripped the excited offender by the collar and held on despite the youth's endeavors to wriggle free.

"Nar, nar," admonished Mr. Glasscock, judicially. "More haste, me lad, less speed. Whut's it all about, that's whut I'd like to know? Whut's the jolly game a-runnin' like a lunytick throo the streets, a-buttin' hones' folk in the ribs?"

"Lemme go, Andy," whined the urchin, still wriggling. "Lemme go. It's a spirit I've seen. Lemme go an' I'll tell you."

"So it's you, then, Young Sam! Well, well, an' you've seen a speerit! Gad, an' you look it. An' where, may I make so bold as to ask, did you see this speerit?"

"Young Sam" told a vivid tale between puffs and gasps. The fisherman eyed him with amusement, mingled with some skepticism.

"An old skull, was it? An' you thought 'twas a speerit? When I was a lad, Young Sam, 'twould be more than a speerit to make me run mad. But a skull, was it?—an' a nail throo the head! Ah, t' be sure."

He thought deeply for a minute and then arrived at a weighty decision.

"Nar, listen to me, Young Sam," he said ponderously. "Mind you, I ain't a-sayin' it war a skull you seen—with a nail throo the head, t' be sure;—but—if it war a skull, why, you see, me lad—you see, we ort to

get that skull, you an' me, Young Sam!"

"Not me," declared Young Sam with youthful finality. "I don't want the old skull!"

"Ah, me lad, an' there's where you're foolish. An' I'll tell you why, says I. Because, says I, that skull may be worth a pint o' money to us, Young Sam. Suppose now, there war a reward of a few hundred pounds offered fer that skull, says I, I suppose that, an' whut do you say?"

He wrinkled his brow quaintly and winked a solemn eye at the boy.

"Come now, I thought you'd think better of it. An' all you need do, Young Sam, is come with me in the boat and keep your eye peeled fer the old skull, d'you see? An' half the money's yours."

It was at about this point that the subject of the discussion left its moorings and started on its journey seaward. Some moments later a small boat put off from a secluded dock near Clove and floated out into the center of the stream. It contained two persons, a man and a boy. While the man rowed, the boy looked. It was inevitable that they should encounter the peregrinating head, being directly in its path.

Twenty minutes later, with a shout of triumph, Young Sam pointed it out.

"With a nail throo its head, t'be sure," murmured Mr. Glasscock, incredulously, as he drew the relic over the side.

But Mr. Glasscock's computations were doomed to disappointment when he appeared, serenely composed, before the chief magistrate of the village. That periwigged gentleman smiled sardonically at Mr. Glasscock's queries relative to a reward proffered for the return of "any missing head."

"And," he concluded his short speech, dryly, "if you have discovered a head,—'any missing head,' Mr. Glasscock,—I would suggest that you turn it over at once to the proper authorities, with a full statement of how it came into your possession."

Mr. Glasscock played his trump card. He produced the impaled skull from beneath his coat with the air of Perseus displaying the head of Medusa.

"The head," he announced, grandiloquently, "of Cromwell!"

A roar of laughter greeted this sally, in the midst of which Mr. Glasscock was unceremoniously seized by two soldiers. His air of successful proprietorship immediately vanished, and he appeared vastly discouraged.

"I tell you I found it in the river," he protested angrily, in response to a stream of questions. "Young Sam, here, can tell you the same."

Young Sam, finding escape impossible, corroborated Mr. Glasscock's remarks, and after an uncomfortable half hour the pair was allowed to go. As they moved away from the bench the magistrate remarked, scornfully, "If you find any more skulls floating in the river, Mr. Glasscock, you may capture and report them, but spare our emotions and do not announce them as Cromwell's."

A deputy bent over and whispered something in his ear.

"Yes," snarled the justice, testily, "and there was a spike through the head of every rogue hanged at every crossroads. Even this Cromwell can only have one head,—and we have heard of seven, to date!"

That evening the head of Cromwell appeared miraculously on the magistrate's study table. The magistrate, in robe and slippers and destitute of his pompous wig, studied it intently for a time both through and over his spectacles.

"Yes," he mused sonorously, "even this Cromwell had but one head, and, by the Virgin, I believe you are the head. You have an uncommon bump on your top, Oliver, which you got when you fell off your pole;—but it's little thanks I'll get for returning you; so, by your leave, I'll e'en keep you for a spell. You will form an interesting, if secret, *mementote mortalem esse* in my triumphal chariot."

Twenty years later this collector died. The head of Cromwell, with other effects and trinkets, passed to a female relative who would not have had the head of John the Baptist about the house for any price; in consequence of which her son sold a collection of his uncle's gruesome

memorials to a youthful dealer in curios.

Behold now the skull of the immortal Oliver, the central piece in a shopkeeper's window, otherwise horrible with snake-skins, carved horns from the Indies, curious shells, the boots of a Parliamentary colonel,—irony, irony!—and a crystal gazing-globe of unquestionable virtues. But the rusted bodkin at length is missing as a result of the young man's desire to make everything as saleable as might be.

In due season an itinerant phrenologist became possessed of the head for a few coppers and, for a time, he who had taught England the art of war, served in this interesting connection to teach wayside scapegraces the construction of the human cranium. Up and down the length of rural England traveled the memorial, serving as the skull of Spaniard, Greek, Bavarian and Englishman in as many weeks. But hard times fell upon the phrenologist, and on a day in June, nearly half a century after his death and some twenty-five years after his descent at the feet of the drunken roisterer, Oliver Cromwell (that of him that was not a part of the earth below Tyburn) passed into the hands of Mr. Israel Russell, who immediately set up a peep-show in Mead's Court, Bond Street, and proceeded to do an astonishing business. Thus Oliver came back to London.

Now Mr. Israel Russell had a daughter, a gypsyish creature, with a fine, passionate face and the temper of the devil's chief mistress. Miss Dorinda Russell it was who sold admissions to Mr. Israel Russell's peep-show, and who jollied the young bloods into visiting that chamber of horrors. Indeed, it was Miss Dorinda Russell who named the immortal head and made it the sensation of the hour.

A notorious highwayman had had the misfortune to have his neck stretched some weeks prior to the arrival of the head in London, and the opportunity was insistent. So up went a legend over the door, boldly inviting young and old to enter (for a price) and "see the head of Swinton." The show contained other treasures, but "Swinton" was the big drawing card.

The venture thrived beyond all expectation; so much so that, after some months had passed, Miss Dorinda Russell remarked to her father that she believed she was entitled to a half share in the proceeds.

"A half share in the—Good God!"

Mr. Israel Russell sat down heavily in a chair and all but wept. Miss Russell announced calmly enough that she expected shortly to marry, and that if Mr. Israel Russell preferred to bestow the half interest on her intended husband (after he had become her husband in fact), she would make no demur.

Mr. Russell recovered his breath with an oath.

"You damned baggage!" he stormed. "Get married, indeed! And a half interest." He collapsed again. After a time, during which Miss Russell watched him furtively, with black brows bent, he asked quietly: "Who is the fortunate youth?"

"Coming to reason, are you?" queried his daughter, harshly. "Well, it's Miles Fletcher, if you care to know!"

"I thought as much," replied Mr. Israel Russell, in the cool tone that had succeeded his outburst. "Then I'll tell you what I'll do for you—and Miles. I'll see you both damned before I'll give either of you a penny! A drunken lout that you met at the door, and you suggest— Good God!"

He gripped himself spasmodically and strode out, leaving something that resembled an impotent fury behind him.

But that night Miss Dorinda Russell and Mr. Miles Fletcher appeared mysteriously before the shrine of "Swinton," at an hour which even the living Swinton might have thought scandalous, and after sundry emotional calisthenics removed the fateful head from its prison.

Two days later Miss Dorinda Russell, with some asperity, inquired of Mr. Miles Fletcher when he purposed procuring a parson to legalize their bonds. The scene was a country inn, more or less remote from London, and Mr. Miles Fletcher, gazing languidly out of the window, replied that he didn't know that it made much difference; that any time in the fall, or the winter, or even the following winter, would be satisfactory to him.

His obliging deprecation failed entirely to satisfy Miss Russell, however. With a vivid remark she caught up and hurled at him the first object that came to hand. It happened to be the unfortunate head of Cromwell, and it passed Mr. Fletcher's head with a whizzing sound that made him duck, and then passed on through the glass and the window and into the inn yard below.

"You slut!" grated Mr. Fletcher, turning in a rage.

Miss Russell's remarks unfortunately (or fortunately) are lost. It may be assumed, however, that they were carefully descriptive and pregnant. They stood glaring at one another, panting, for a moment. Then the door of their room burst open, and in stormed the landlord.

The subsequent remarks of Mr. Fletcher and Miss Russell were made, each to himself, in privacy; Mr. Fletcher's in the seclusion of the village lock-up, Miss Russell's in the dusk of evening, on a highway more miles from London than she cared to think about.

The next morning, having appeared against Mr. Fletcher, Landlord bethought himself of his broken window and the object that had been hurled through it. He feared that it might have been something of his own. Investigation disclosed nothing but a strange skull on the grass, which so shocked the excellent Boniface that he never thought to connect it with his disorderly guests. So apparently, however, was the skull an ancient one that after some hesitation he picked it up and carried it inside.

And for half a century it stood behind the bar of the "Red Rooster," at the end of which period the then landlord, noticing that it was becoming shabby, had it carefully varnished and otherwise preserved and presented it to the vicar.

The vicar, a lovable soul, had the crown carefully removed and the whole remodeled into an excellent tobacco jar.

I was talking to the old fellow's great-grandson (also a clergyman) down Sussex way, one day in the late 'nineties, while in search of local color, and he waxed enthusiastic about the skull. We had both filled our pipes from it, and the garrulous oldster was not to be gainsaid.

"Death, like life," said he, "has its history, and man often terminates his strange vicissitudes on earth only to enter upon other vicissitudes, still stranger, in the grave. I wonder, now, that no one ever has undertaken the posthumous memoirs of the great. What a volume that would be! How startling its paradoxes, how fine its irony, how pointed its antitheses! Write it with a pen of lead on leaves of opium, and it would glow with eloquence; indite it in mournful cadences and it would blaze with wit."

"It would be a carnival of extremes," I agreed. "Addison and Bill Nye talking in the same breath; Rabelais and St. Paul shouting each other down."

"Ay," continued the vicar, "Fortune has cracked many a joke in her time, but Death's jokes are better. This skull intrigues me mightily. It has no history, of course; none, at least, that I have been able to trace, but whose may it not have been? Shakespeare makes Hamlet imagine Alexander stopping a beer barrel, or Caesar patching a wall to keep out the wind. He ought to have known that both were burned to snuff. But we need not go to fiction for Death's sermons. Talbot, the scourge of France:—when his grave was opened, it was found that a mouse had built its nest in his skull, and the bodies of three small mice were extracted; Turenne:—when his remains were exhumed, a savant begged the skeleton for the National Academy of Anatomy. Milton was dismembered by a crew of drunken revelers, and we are told that a select body of medical gentlemen, with the skull of the great Dean of St. Patrick's grinning before them on a table, expressed lively satisfaction at its formation."

"But *this* skull," I interrupted. "You do not believe it is that of some mighty celebrity,—say Charles the First, or Cromwell?"

"Ah," quoth the vicar, "there you have me. My imagination stops at nothing, but my belief is modest. Some humble fellow who little dreamed the purpose he would serve. He makes an excellent tobacco jar. *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra!*"

THE SQUEALER

BY GRISWOLD WHEELER

Renewing his claim to the "only girl" at stated periods, as he would renew a lease, is small satisfaction to a man in jail. Add an active suitor or two on the outside, and we have an excellent example of unfair competition.

FIFTEEN years. It is a long time, but as Murray went over the evidence he did not blame them.

It was all very clear as he looked back. He even recalled flushing guiltily at the apparent paucity of his defense in the bungling hands of his attorney. After he had made his plea there had followed a brief period of incredulous silence, uninterrupted by the prosecutor who felt that the flimsiness of the defense was his own best point. Some of the jury had exchanged glances that barely concealed smiles. Then they had left the room.

In the interim that followed, the accused sat idly counting the minutes as they paced themselves off on the face of a drowsily ticking clock. Back in the court room was a girl whose glance he dared not meet, for he felt its pathetic intensity, strengthened by her belief and love. His attorney had approached and mumbled a few words that he failed to catch exactly. Then the jury had returned. Evidently there had been little to discuss and Murray construed the fact as counting against him. But one face among them all held sufficient individuality to arrest his attention and in that face he read conviction. So when the man rose and pronounced the word "Guilty," the condemned heard it without surprise. Then sentence was pronounced, and the court adjourned.

Later, as he sat in the dusty little cell, Murray's thoughts wended back to the afternoon. What would the girl do now, he wondered. What he would do was already pre-determined, but with her it was different. They had been about to be married. That she would wait did not even occur to him. Fifteen years was a long time; what is more, those who serve it do not always emerge fit for matrimony. And as he was very much of a man he cast about in his mind for someone to fill his place. But whenever such a "one" occurred to him, he met the thought grudgingly.

He was chiding himself for this spirit of selfishness when Elsie Graym was announced. The girl entered and, without even waiting to see if the warden had left, she walked straight into his arms. It seemed very good to hold her again, very real, and the idea that he was a prisoner commenced to recede, to be suddenly recalled by her announcement that she had been allowed only a few minutes.

Then Murray, being a poor bungling male, released her from the promise, which hurt her and made her cry. He apologized for the suggestion, but went on to explain what a bad place a big city was for a girl to live in all alone.

"I will wait," she asserted emphatically.

"It will be fifteen years, Elsie," he reminded.

She said she didn't care if it were fifty.

Thus they quarreled away a good part of the valuable time she had striven so hard to obtain,—he urging her to do what he did not want her to do, she striving valiantly to do what they both wished. At length they compromised and agreed that she was to wait from year to year and at the end of each year was to have the right to change her mind.

"And who knows," said she, "but you may be pardoned." They both smiled at the prospect and were momentarily as happy as though they really believed in it.

Soon the time was up and the warden

came to announce the fact. But neither of them heard him and as he was old enough to have been their father, he quietly moved away. Then a peculiar thing happened. His watch, that had not varied three minutes in as many years, suddenly lost a whole half hour and did not make it up until the girl had left the cell.

A few days later Murray commenced to appease the state with some of the best years of his life.

As for the girl, she got a typewriter and slowly commenced to pick out the letters until it seemed that she was doing it very fast. Then she applied for a position. Peter Carter, a fat man in a brown suit, asked her to sit down and let him see what she could do. And because so much depended upon it she did very poorly. The fat man laughed rudely and said that he had been to funerals, but— Whereupon the girl's lip quivered and she said that she really could do better but that he had frightened her. This caused him to laugh again and tell her that there was nothing about him to be frightened at. He concluded by informing her that some of the girls thought he was a "dear old skeesicks." At which they both laughed.

Then he had glanced at her again. Liking the color of her hair and her eyes, which were like bits of blue sky surmounted by waves of corn silk, he suggested that they have another try. This time he dictated so slowly that the office boy, happening to pass through the room, paused in consternation. Carter flushed and trebled his speed until the boy had left.

When the letter was finished, he suddenly recalled some theatre tickets a friend had sent him.

Did she like the theatre?

Vaguely she felt that upon her enjoyment of the drama depended her chance of employment. So she professed a moderate enthusiasm, though her heart still ached badly. Somewhat later Carter bought the tickets.

During the evening she conducted herself with such marked decorum that he hesitated to mention the contingent supper which was to have followed. He said good-night in approved fashion, cursing himself for a fool, and the following day employed her at a salary strongly suggestive of fictitious values.

The girl commenced to do very well, and soon her fingers acquired a normal rapidity. But at times when Carter sat near staring fixedly at them for long intervals, she would become confused and strike the wrong letters. Whereupon he would glance hastily out of the window while he fumblingly arranged his cravat.

Eventually he commenced to propose in faltering, ardent words of love. On such occasions the girl would blush wildly, and not wishing to offend, murmur, "No, I thank you," as though he had offered her a confection. At length she became quite accustomed to the compliment. Once when, three consecutive times within the same morning, he made the suggestion that they go in search of a minister, she took down what he said verbatim, then handed it to him to read. He, falling in with the spirit of the occasion, made a few corrections, signed it and handed it back. This served the purpose of putting the situation on the basis of a jest, and made it less embarrassing, to say the least.

At length came the day when the girl, through the efforts of the attorney, who felt slightly ashamed of the way he had handled the case, obtained permission to visit her fiance. She found him seated in his cell endeavoring, with the stub of a pencil, to figure out to a fraction just how much of his term remained. He had reduced it to hours and was looking very pale and despondent. She finished the problem for him, cheating unscrupulously, and insisted on deducting eight hours from every night. For as he would be asleep they didn't count. Then she made him promise that instead of any more such morose mathematics he would write to her, mailing the letters when he could.

He promised and kept his word, after adding back the eight hours; which, after all, was fair, for no one knew how little he really slept.

Following one of these visits, which her lawyer, whose shame was rapidly diminishing, intimated might be her last, her hand-

bag became mislaid, and nothing could pacify her until she had given a description of it to the head warden.

As it was not the warden's busy afternoon, a desultory conversation developed, which the girl did her best to prolong. Before she left he had listened in assenting unbelief to the whole story of how prisoner 1292, known to his friends as "Murray," had come unjustly to be a prisoner within those drear walls. And then, being very tired and in the mood, she cried a little. The warden, glancing critically at her, promised she could come often to see the prisoner, and would have consoled her further had she not thanked him and hurriedly left. Shortly afterwards she paid her carfare from the missing handbag that in some mysterious way she had recovered.

As time dragged by the girl became noticeably thinner, and little lines commenced to form at the corners of her eyes, the pupils of which had become slightly contracted from the confining work. She still visited the prison as often as permissable, and the warden always inquired regularly in regard to the missing handbag. Then he would speak of the weather. And often when it looked like rain he would detain her until the rain became an actuality, when he would escort her to the car. For this courtesy she would thank him and smile her sweetest, an expression that changed to a worried look when the car had started, for she was coming to find him a masterful man.

It was on one of those rainy afternoons that Fate, who often takes delight in allowing us to catch bird's eye glimpses of our sorrows, called Murray to the small window of his cell. As the air from over the river was cool and fresh he pressed his face against the bars, gazing listlessly out. Thus he chanced to see the warden walk jauntily across the prison yard, confidently guiding a girl whose hat was adorned with a white bird. What was more, Murray happened to know this bird; in fact he had but a short time before held its owner in his arms as though he had no intention of ever letting her go. When the couple finally disappeared from view he turned from the window and on his rather open countenance were the first hard lines that had ever appeared.

Yet when he attempted to reconcile the light in her eyes when she had kissed him, with her subsequent conduct, he found his task a difficult one.

In another part of that grim old prison the girl was also having her troubles. The warden, instead of seeing her to the car, a privilege he no longer waited upon the weather to assume, had turned toward her, a queer light in his rather pale blue eyes.

"I think your lost handbag has been discovered," he remarked. "Come into the office and see if it is the right one." Once within the room he had locked the door and taking her resisting form into his arms kissed her repeatedly on the mouth and eyes, then, slightly tilting her head, upon her wildly throbbing throat. With a short gasp she broke away from him, with all her strength striking him full in the mouth. Then she leaned swaying against the wall, brushing her lips with a tiny handkerchief, very much the little child.

For an instant the warden's pale eyes became even more sinister. But being at heart somewhat of a diplomat, he forced a rather twisted smile upon his lips and, disregarding the blow, placed a chair, motioning her into it. She refused it and continued to regard him with flaming cheeks.

"Don't play the fool," commanded the man roughly at length, finding the girl's gaze rather disconcerting.

"How dared you?" she murmured.

"Because I wanted to," he stated curtly. Then, "See here," he continued, "I've been wanting to have a little talk with you for some time." The girl glanced desperately toward the door. "It's locked," the man assured her, a trifle grimly. He lighted a cigar, studied it briefly, then swung toward her.

"Are you as crazy about **him** as you seem?" he demanded.

"Yes," she said simply.

"In India," he reflected, "when a man dies they kill his wife. But this is America. And what's more, you weren't married to him. Were you?" he pressed.

"No," she admitted.

"Then isn't it about time you came to

your senses? He might as well be dead for the next fifteen years so far as you are concerned. You're good looking," he continued. "You wouldn't be a woman if I had to tell you that. There are plenty of men who would consider it a privilege to make life comfortable for you.

"I was thinking of myself just then," he added, as she made no reply.

"I love him," she said quietly, "though I thank you for the compliment." If there was a tinge of sarcasm in her voice it was very faint, for so much depended upon his generosity.

"Well," said he, rising and unlocking the door, "think it over. It's a long time, and some women age faster than others. There was one," he added reminiscently, "who altered to such an extent that when the man was released he felt sure it wasn't the same woman and married someone else."

She caught the implication and paled slightly, then started toward the door.

"Just a minute," he spoke arrestingly, and the girl paused. "That handbag may turn up yet," said he, "and it might pay you to come and inquire for it occasionally. But as for visiting the prisoner, I'm afraid it has already caused unfavorable comment."

The warden had seen many hopeless eyes but he never forgot those of the young girl who faced him that day as she said blankly, "You've got me, haven't you?"

This was but another of the straws fate placed upon the already heavy burden of prisoner 1292. The glimpse he caught of her crossing the prison yard guided by the jaunty warden was to be his last for some time. And as all of her notes went invariably astray he placed the obvious construction and endeavored to regard the matter as a closed book, though memory frequently insisted upon turning the pages.

The girl went back to the fat man in the brown suit, to which he had, it being spring, added some very unusual vests. So unusual in fact that she insisted he keep his coat buttoned. And he, mistaking her solicitude for a dawning affection, did as requested and enjoyed himself accordingly.

Gradually at the corners of her mouth hard lines commenced to form. She rubbed them with a short upward motion and hoped that they would disappear. But they didn't, though Carter, being in love, failed to notice them. At length his numerous dinners stretched themselves into suppers, which generally followed a theatre; and one evening when her heart was aching particularly hard, she reached out and took a sip of his wine. Deeming it the forerunner of a growing trust, he ordered another bottle. Soon she talked wildly, made fun of his clothes and ended by informing him that he was horribly fat. He hurried her home in a cab, and that night prayed furiously for the first time in many years. Subsequently in deference to her unguardedly expressed disapproval, he bought a series of tickets for a turkish bath which but served to treble his appetite. He never ordered wine again.

At last came a day on which he closed his desk some two hours earlier than usual and, asking her to accompany him, left the office. The weather was warm and they took a taxi. The city drifted swiftly past. Finally they reached the suburbs with their rows of small houses, all agreeably shaded, standing in little yards of their own. Before a particularly ornate one, they paused. Carter alighted, she following. He fitted the key with an air of proprietorship to a door with a stained glass panel, and swung it hospitably open.

"I want your opinion upon it," he advised her.

She went critically from room to room, each more glaringly resplendent than its predecessor, and all somehow suggestive of the vests over which she had buttoned the coat. Finally she came to a room on an upper floor. Its walls were papered with nymphs and fairies in scant attire riding abandonedly in grossly overcrowded boats upon cotton batting waves.

"What room is this to be?" she demanded, a vague note of accusation in her voice.

The man flushed and fumbled with his tie. "The nursery," he admitted. "What do you think of it?"

Again she gazed about the room, and pictured future generations of helpless infants choking upon pieces of the cotton batting waves. She turned toward the man

fully prepared to express her opinion, when something in his expression halted her. His small eyes were upon her with a suggestion of eagerness somehow pathetic. "I designed that myself," he announced proudly, indicating the panorama of fairyland courting shipwreck.

"You did?" she said with awe.

"Yes," he stated proudly, "all of it. But you haven't said if you like it yet."

Again she glanced at him, his red face and the heavy figure clothed in the garments of an indiscriminate individualist. His little eyes were upon her hopefully, pleading; and being a woman she understood; understanding, she lied. "It's perfectly lovely," said she, and the man was well repaid.

"I knew you would like it!" he exclaimed proudly.

A silence commenced to settle between them. "Yes," she said again, "it's very pretty." Her voice carried an absent ring.

"And cozy," suggested the man.

"And cozy," she echoed, her thoughts far off with another, who with a stub of a pencil had once figured desperately upon the days and hours that separated him from a home.

Suddenly Carter turned, and with his own stage setting as a background, proposed with an ardor and fluency that is not generally attributed to a stout man, with small, hard eyes. He was very inclusive in his arguments, having evidently dwelt at length upon each aspect. It was all very carefully outlined from marriage to the grave. He had even gone a step further and planned a happy reunion in the great beyond.

All of this made it very hard for her to refuse him, and she did so gently and tactfully and felt very unhappy while she was doing it. He heard her through with the expression of one who has just awakened from a pleasant dream.

Perceiving how it was she suggested that they go to some quiet little place for dinner, a suggestion that he met four-fifths of the way as usual.

On the way back he stopped at a real estate office and listed the house for sale or rent. He treated the matter with such abandoned haste that the agent did a very neat little stroke of business.

During the dinner, partly because she must talk to someone and partly because she felt that in some indefinable way it was due him, she told the man about the other. How she loved him and had promised to wait because he had been sent to prison unjustly. And in a burst of feeling she added that probably she would have waited anyhow.

Then she told him about the warden, nearly all in fact, and how she could no longer see prisoner 1292.

"Who was his lawyer?" Carter inquired. "It's a wonder he didn't get life," he commented when she had told him, and went on to explain how notorious the man had been for losing his cases. Before the evening was over he had promised to have his own lawyer look into the evidence and see what could be done.

On the way home she remarked that she didn't see how she could ever repay him, not a safe thing for a woman to say to a man who loves her.

He had replied that he would consider a kiss in the light of a substantial equivalent, which was just what she had feared the moment she had spoken. But as so much was at stake and he had been so nice, she said he could. And he did, but in such a different way from what she had expected, so gently and fatherly that she told him he could have another, which he took and then wished he hadn't, for it only made things harder.

As for the girl, she came nearer to loving him than ever before. But as he did not know, it did not matter. And somewhat later when he said good-night, his manner was very kind and quiet and he acted like a man who felt very badly about something, but was determined no one else should know it.

On the same evening the girl had dined with the fat man, Murray sat at a long table with bowed head endeavoring to reduce some very dry bread to a state of digestibility. Finally a voice somewhere near him spoke.

"How would some beaf-steak and baked potatoes taste?" it inquired.

Murray thought they would taste "damn fine," and said so in a low voice, slightly turning his head and taking a swift glance at the speaker, a tall individual with a reckless face, called Quentin.

"Quite some years before you expect to play man of the world again," suggested his neighbor, who apparently had reduced the art of talking and chewing to a simultaneous science.

Murray nodded, "And what's worse, I'm innocent."

The other gulped in mirthful appreciation. "Of course," he conceded dryly, "we all are, every mother's son of us." He chuckled again, a snarling little rumble from deep within his throat.

"Be kinder nice to get out and play around again," he continued, "see the girls and have another fling at the game. What's your line anyhow?"

"I said I was innocent," repeated Murray with some heat.

"Have it that way if you want to," relinquished his companion. "Every man has a right to his own opinion, but guilty or innocent, it would seem kind of nice to get out of this."

Murray nodded emphatically, then checked himself as the guard approached from behind. For an interval there was silence, then when the slow moving footsteps had died away, "You and me want to talk business," said Quentin. "We may have to do it in installments, but keep your ears open and I'll put you wise from time to time as I get the chance. But mum's the word."

"Of course," agreed Murray, and the curt meal came to an end.

From then on, day by day, a plan was communicated to him that at first glance appeared ludicrous. Yet when dissected, its colossal scope was its main stay and as he pondered it grew not only possible but plausible. It was carefully laid, backed by money without and brains within. Dissatisfied guards and quarreling officials augmented the chances of success.

"It's the old one about 'united we stand, divided we fall,'" informed Quentin, attempting the historical. "Most of the 'breaks' have been made by just a few. But this one is to include the whole crowd, and it looks so good that most of the trusties have come in on it."

They were in the workshop with the gang, each man apparently engaged in morose and expressionless labors.

Murray sat clumsily manipulating the sole of a shoe, while nearby Quentin was tossing off pair after pair with the dexterousness he brought to play upon all that he undertook.

"At a given signal," said Quentin apparently addressing the shoe, "we all make a break for it. Some of the doors will be unlocked from the outside, some won't be locked at all. The ones that get out are to release the others until the whole lawn party is assembled."

"How about the guards that aren't in on this?" questioned Murray.

"We hope, for the benefit of their families, they're insured," replied the other significantly.

A song commenced to form itself in Murray's heart. It had no particular meaning, but a voice kept humming "freedom" from somewhere deep within him, and he found difficulty in keeping his lips from echoing the words. He also thought of the girl and wondered if she were happy. He hoped for a moment that she was not,—then with a sudden revulsion of feeling prayed fervently that she was.

As the time drew near the atmosphere became surcharged. Even the officials seemed to feel it and cast innumerable backward glances as inexplicable as they were frequent.

"I'm going to put this shoe down pretty soon," said Quentin one day. "Take it up and pretend to work on it. Inside you'll find a small automatic. When you get the chance, hide it somewhere. Your cell is opposite mine," he continued, "that's why I'm giving it to you. Somewhere near midnight they're going to flash me a signal from the outside, that means everything is ready, and I'll wave to you. Then, as you're on the court, push the gun through your window and let her go. That will signal all over at once, while if I fired, only one end of the building could hear."

Murray nodded, his hands cold and dry

with excitement. Unobserved he secured the automatic, tucked it beneath his belt, and pulled his coat loosely in place.

"Then we all make a break at once," explained Quentin. "Some of the boys are already armed, the rest will get theirs outside; there'll be enough to stock a small revolution." He stretched himself luxuriously at the prospect, heaved a voluminous sigh and continued:

"Once outside, the rest is clear sailing. Those against us will only be a handful. We go down into the town, they'll be asleep. Then we form in bands and go from house to house and it won't be long before we have the clothes and money to make a get-away! The minute you give the signal those on the outside will cut the telephone wires; that will give us plenty of time. By morning we will all be gentlemen of leisure and means, and far away."

Some hours later Murray stood in his cell, gazing down into the little town beneath, his thin, pale hands wrapped tightly about the cold window bars. Spirals of smoke ascended dreamily from chimneys, as all unsuspecting those below moved serenely about. Slowly night stole across the sky, while the town became buried in shadows, only little points of light proclaiming its presence.

Finally he turned slowly and peered along the stone hallway. At a distant end sat a guard huddled forward on a camp stool, head sunk upon hands, half drowsing. Across the way Quentin waved reassuringly.

The hours dragged by. At length Quentin commenced to show signs of excitement. He approached the window and gazed out at the stars, then waited, figure tense, his long lean back in its striped suit somehow suggestive of a snake gathering itself to strike. Suddenly he fumbled at his belt and produced a pocket light no larger than the palm of his hand, held it toward the window and flashed it three times in quick succession, then peered eagerly. Shortly he turned. "They're there," he whispered, breathing rapidly. "Let her go."

Murray arose from the cot and again gazed down the hall way; the guard had disappeared. Briefly he glanced at Quentin whose eyes were flaming dully. The nostrils were rising in a cold little sneer that seemed to blend with the twisted smile upon his lips. With a shrug of disgust Murray stepped to the window, tightly holding the revolver.

The town below was in darkness now, but for a few straggling lights that gleamed up at him, somehow appealingly. His finger on the trigger drew taut; he could feel the settling of the spring. Once more he glanced at Quentin; in the dim light the man's face was ghastly. Years of restrained passion and degeneracy were crowding into his features. He stood at the front of his cell, his long tapering surgeon's fingers grasping the bars, his face upturned as though in prayer, but with a hideous expression upon it. For the last time Murray turned toward the slumbering town, his hand slightly trembled. There were women and children there, asleep, defenseless; while within the walls of the prison were men like Quentin. A few, perhaps, innocent, but the majority like the one behind him. He could feel the man's eyes upon him even now, suspicious of the momentary delay.

"Well," the word rasped across the corridor.

Murray wheeled. "Nothing doing, Quentin," he informed curtly, and seated himself upon the rough board table facing the other.

"You mean?" Quentin's white face was pushed between the bars like a venomous wedge, and his heavy jaws worked choppingly as though controlled by springs.

"That the majority of the boys are too hard a lot to turn loose upon that town down there. They can't help it because we're penned."

Quentin's eyes narrowed until they became mere slits below his forehead, upon which a mesh-work of blue, congested veins throbbed with rage. When he spoke his voice was low, almost caressing.

"You damned squealer," he said.

In the little town beneath, a girl with hair like waves of corn silk and eyes like bits of blue sky waited eagerly for morning that she might tell Murray of his release.

GOOD NEWS

BY JEAN MAHAN PLANK

In nine cases out of ten, the young man with a modest inheritance and some ideals, has neither money nor ideals after a fling at the publishing business. It is in the tenth case that the world loses a cynic.

THE puzzled frown with which Chauncey Perry had been slowly typing an item on the machine in his little private office disappeared as he gleefully abandoned the task at a welcome announcement by Billy, the office boy.

"A young lady, Mr. Perry,—from the Collegiate Bureau."

Chauncey's inexperience with office help could not have been more definitely shown than by his prompt supposition that the first applicant to arrive had come to go to work.

"Ask the young lady to come in here, Billy."

The cherubic physique of Billy was presently displaced by a hesitating figure in the doorway. Chauncey, with whom gentle manners had become instinctive by way of ten years of Latin tutoring in a private school, stepped cheerfully forward to greet the young woman, held a chair until she was safely—and somewhat surprisedly—seated, then placed himself with his back to a big Renaissance mahogany desk with brand-new, shining appointments, and faced the applicant with a smiling bow.

"Can you go to work right away?" he asked politely. "You see—"

"Now?" An astonished flush darted over the thin, pale face of the girl. "Why, —you haven't seen my references, nor—"

"Oh, quite true,—I beg pardon! Let me—" He looked helplessly about for his memoranda. He had been told three questions he must put to applicants. Failing to find the written slip, he stumbled upon the first query.

"Where have you worked, Miss—"

"Stanley—Mary Stanley," she told him.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Stanley!"

"I have some letters, but—not—from—" She colored slightly as she arose and handed him the papers. Chauncey sprang to his feet to receive them.

He read the letters absently while he tried to think of the second question. It popped in, opportunely, and out.

"How long since you left your last position? Is one of these letters—"

"No, Mr. Perry." The girl's voice trembled. She was seated upon the edge of her chair. "I've been out of work for three months—and ill. There is no letter from the last position." The voice sank into a frightened silence.

Chauncey, with his face full of inquiring sympathy, adjusted his eye-glasses and looked for the first time directly at the girl. His comment, however, was mental.

"By Jove! She looks hungry." He saw faint blue lines under the dark gray eyes, noticed the thinness of the sloping shoulders. "I wonder—"

This wonder had the fortunate effect of helping him to propound the third question.

"What salary do you have, Miss Stanley?"

The questioning gray eyes turned upon him with a hunted, terrified look. They searched his face.

"I would start with—almost anything, Mr. Perry, if you would try me. Would—ten dollars a week be too—"

This modest suggestion suddenly reminded Chauncey that he wanted Miss Stanley's services in a double capacity. After adjusting the salary matter in a way that made the applicant move further back in her chair with a look half puzzled, half relieved, he proceeded to ex-

pound to her the policy of this enterprise.

"Our paper, Miss Stanley, is to be published fortnightly,—the *"Fortnightly Good News,"* as we are calling it. Now, that name may puzzle you. You see, I—er—*we,* I mean,—have had a strong conviction that the world would be better if papers, instead of thrusting before its eyes morning and evening every sin and folly known to mankind, would take the same trouble to find out the good things, the—not only, you know, the big, extraordinary things, like a huge bequest to a university, or a public library presented to a village, but the tiny accumulations of good that make up the solid sum of human virtue." Chauncey stopped to smile benignantly through his glasses at the pale faced girl.

Miss Stanley was staring at him. "But—would that be—*news?*" she ventured in her timid, trembling voice. "You see," she explained, "I worked a bit at journalism, but—"

"News?" Chauncey was aroused. "Is it news to me,—to you?" He snatched up the morning journal. "'Policeman shot by brother-in-law, dead.' 'Man sued by wife, hiding, she says.' 'Man murdered in Clark Street.' 'Woman drugged, found in alley.' Is *this* news? No! It is news when we hear—as I heard yesterday—that a frail, once beautiful woman has for ten years supported a husband who is a drug fiend, and does it with a joy and quivering delight that a pampered society woman could not even imagine. She canvasses for books. And it is news that an expressman in Woodlawn saves every cent he can spare through the week, even abandoning his pipe, in order to buy beautiful flowers to take on Sunday to his wife in the insane asylum."

Miss Stanley again ventured: "But—will they—like it?"

"Like it?" Chauncey frowned. "Why, didn't you like to hear those things?"

"I mean the people reported about—"

"Oh, I see. Why, I think that a man—or woman either,"—he bowed in deference to Miss Stanley's sex,—"who wouldn't be willing and glad to sacrifice his own private feeling in order to uplift and cheer the world, and give it a glimpse of real goodness—real selflessness, is at heart not selfless, but is narrow, non-altruistic."

As Miss Stanley did not venture further, Chauncey outlined to her the double duty.

"For the present, Miss Stanley, I shall ask you to be my stenographer as well as to manage a department. Please find out, for your department only, as I have two reporters, such acts as I have indicated, done by persons of your own age and walk in life. With an enthusiastic gesture Chauncey stepped to a filing cabinet to get some papers to show his newly acquired assistant. As he closed the case, he brushed from his extremely well built sleeve an atom of dust, and pulled his white cuffs a trifle further over his wrists. When he turned about, Miss Stanley's face had softened from its strained expression, and she was biting her lip.

A month of work was to be done before the *Fortnightly Good News* should become a fact in its initial number. After the first two hours of her occupation, Miss Stanley entered a protest. Chauncey had come in with a tiny, gray, down-and-out kitten, and was seated before his desk watching the little animal absorb the contents of a pint bottle of milk, which the editor of *Good News* emptied by spoonfuls into his stamp moistener. Miss Stanley had arisen to go to the files, but she suddenly stood still and looked deprecatingly at her chief.

"Mr. Perry," she said in an amused tone, "will you *please* not arise every time I get out of my chair?"

Chauncey, astounded, stood gazing at her and rubbing the kitten's fur the wrong way.

"You see, Mr. Perry, we'll never get ready for the first issue if you do that. I've postponed writing three letters for an hour because I wanted the blanks and didn't like to make you get up."

Chauncey dropped into his chair with a short laugh. "Very well, Miss Stanley." He stroked the kitten's rapidly plumping sides and murmured abstractedly: "I think I'll call her *Nuntia Bona.*"

As the business of publication began to focus and everyone concerned was wear-

ing a harassed look, Miss Stanley handed her copy for her department to Chauncey for approval.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's fine. Nobody but one who knows those girls could have got at those items. Wonderful! Now,—only one suggestion,—I think it would be effective if you would have always the heading, 'Kindest Act of the Fortnight,' or something of the sort, and put it about the middle of your column. Don't you think so?"

Miss Stanley agreed with enthusiasm and the work went merrily forward.

When Chauncey was alone one day, his cousin, Abel Perry, stuck his head inside the office door.

"Hello, Chaunce!" said Abel. "Got rid of it all yet?"

Chauncey grinned. "You make yourself scarce, young fellow, or you'll meet the same fate your namesake did some centuries ago."

"Well, you see I'm interested. I have a wager up on you. Bartley bet you'd be able to give Aunt Jane's legacy away inside of a month, and I bet it would take two months. Please hold on to a few hundreds so I shall come out ahead."

Chauncey's face sobered. "Perhaps I am an enthusiast rather than a business man—"

Abel roared, but he came up to his cousin and put his arm around his shoulders.

"Enthusiast! Lucky for me that you were one when I was needing funds for my last year in college! But, Chaunce—" Abel drew up a chair. His face became serious. "Honestly, we all hoped that now you'd make life easier for yourself with that five thousand. You could keep on with your tutoring, but take a three months' vacation every summer instead of coaching that juvenile team in football all through the hot weeks in order to send somebody else on a vacation!"

Chauncey laughed. "The football coaching wasn't bad. It means that I can lick anybody who doesn't happen to like the *Fortnightly Good News*,—beginning with you, Abel."

"Well, I know all that, but—why, you could go to Japan,—the Bahamas,—or—"

Chauncey squared his shoulders. "The *Good News* will let me do that, too," he said jocularly.

Abel could not conceal his disgust. Chauncey continued:

"I know how you all feel about it, and it means more to me than any of you imagine. Failure is a bitter pill to swallow. If this project fails, I—" Chauncey turned to his desk and extended a hand that was not entirely steady as he laid it on the silken fur of Nuntia Bona. The kitten, now making its toilet among his papers, had responded quickly to soft living, and wore, with the air of a born aristocrat, the blue satin ribbon Miss Stanley had tied about its neck. It curled with playful fierceness about its master's hand.

Abel took his cousin's other hand. "There's every reason why you should succeed, Chaunce, but why not take something that can be made to go,—something there's a call for,—something the world needs?"

This was pouring oil on peaceful fires. Chauncey faced him indignantly.

"The world needs! Why, on the morning that I decided upon this adventure, the little mathematics teacher in our school read the newspaper at breakfast and suddenly burst out crying,—saying that it was horrible,—no good in all the world,—nothing but a pit of tragedy;—it was hell,—she believed we were in hell. She left the table. The next morning before breakfast, she threw herself from the third story window to the asphalt pavement."

Abel was silent. Chauncey caught his breath and struck his fist upon the desk. "If a paper like this can't succeed,—if the people don't want to know of the good, only the bad, then it is hell that we are living in."

Abel shook his cousin's shoulders without a word, and left the office.

The *Fortnightly Good News*, in a simple but attractive gown, had hardly appeared in the mail boxes and on the news stands of Woodlawn before the office telephones began to get busy. The first voice was that of an irate capitalist.

"Is this the editor of that Good News paper? This is C. C. Barnard. What do you mean by dragging my name before the

public in this way? Who was that guy that wrote me up like that? I'd like to break his neck. Telling everybody that—that—"

"Why Mr. Barnard!" Chauncey's surprise was not assumed. "It couldn't be possible that you would object to having people know that your great and wonderful success had come about through prayer!—and that you acknowledge the Power that has given you your great wealth."

"Well, well! but what d'you think people will say about my talking about it? Why, I'll be the laughing stock of Woodlawn. Oh, confound—"

"Why, Mr. —"

"Now, never mind! You cut that out. If you ever mention my name again in your little two-for-a-cent sheet, I'll prosecute,—Oh, such damn foolish—" Click! The offended Croesus had shut off.

Chauncey had no time to stand paralyzed before the telephone, for it rang again. The woman with the doping husband was hysterical. They were disgraced. It was cruel—cruel.

"I'll correct it," cried Chauncey desperately, "in the next issue."

"Correct it! You can't correct those things afterward. You have no business to drag private parties into such publicity."

The expressman who so poetically cared for his crazy wife was inconsolable because "de gang" would guy him. Being a person of active habits, he invited the editor of *Good News* to come out in the alley and "he'd show 'im."

"Well, I could lick you," responded Chauncey quietly, "but I wouldn't. If I come out, I'll let you lick me. Any man who is true and faithful under such conditions as those can wipe the floor with me if he wants to."

"Aw,—well,—mebbe you didn't mean no harm, only de gang—"

Twenty-seven in all there were before luncheon time. At a quarter of twelve Chauncey dropped into his chair and rubbed his hands over his neatly cropped head.

"It's me for tutoring the rest of my life," he sighed. "Glad there'll be a bit left to help—"

His eye fell upon the bright, fresh copy of *Good News* that Miss Stanley had laid on top of his papers. The editor had been too much occupied to give it more than a hurried perusal. He unfolded it now, but without the fine glow and gratitude that he had pictured as being his emotions upon seeing his own paper in print.

Nuntia Bona, dreaming sweet, milk-fed dreams in her master's manuscript basket, was presently startled into a humped, bristling little ball of fur by his sudden violence of action. Chauncey sprang to his feet, and uttered a word that didn't sound familiar to Nuntia Bona. He adjusted his eye-glasses, and read the item again.

KINDEST ACT OF THE FORTNIGHT

"Over a month ago, the editor of *Fortnightly Good News* engaged a stenographer. He saw that she was penniless—hungry—not strong. He employed her at a salary double the amount she asked. He at once drew a check for a month in advance and handed it to her.

"During that month, the editor has worked side by side with that stenographer. He has never once invited her to go to luncheon with him. He has never asked her if she was fond of the theatre. He has never told her that she did her hair beautifully.

"Taking these facts together, the conductor of this column considers that they constitute the kindest act she has known."

Chauncey rang with vigorous repetitions a bell attached to his desk.

"Billy, where is Miss Stanley?"

"Out here, writin' at her desk."

"Ask her to step here," commanded the editor sternly.

Billy's scared face vanished. Miss Stanley, calm, attentive, with a slight suggestion of roses in her cheeks, appeared.

"Miss Stanley,"—Chauncey was grasping *Good News* with both hands,—"how could you? What on earth— Why, you've made me the laughing stock of Woodlawn—in my own paper!"

The stenographer elevated her eyebrows. "Why, Mr. Perry! You told me to put under that heading the kindest act of the

fortnight, and you said that anyone should be willing and glad to sacrifice private feelings to uplift and cheer the world. And—Mr. Perry,"—the calmness showed signs of breaking,—"that was the very kindest act I ever knew. Mr. Perry—*that* was the reason I left my last place—the reason there was no letter of recommendation for me. It made me ill,—the worry of it all,—and I—"

Chauncey dropped the paper and gazed at his assistant while she made this rather vague explanation.

"Miss Stanley, you must have come up against some awful hard things."

"They were not easy, Mr. Perry."

Her face worked. Chauncey thought for an instant she was trying to keep from laughing. But suddenly she broke out crying and left the room.

He stood motionless for a minute. Then he swore—an oath somewhat stronger, yet quite as harmless, as the "by seint Loy" of Chaucer's prioress. Into the midst of the soft cursing, however, he suddenly broke with the inapropos remark:

"She does do her hair beautifully."

When Chauncey returned from luncheon that day, Miss Stanley followed him into the sanctum.

"Here is a bunch of letters just come, Mr. Perry. Shall I help you open them?"

Chauncey laughed somewhat bitterly. "I think I'm braced for the next onslaught. You cut the envelopes, please, and I'll wade in."

The reading did not proceed far. Chauncey uttered an exclamation. As Miss Stanley looked up inquiringly, he exclaimed again.

"Look here—read that!" He handed her a letter.

Miss Stanley read:

"You have saved my life—and more than that.

"I have been for some years playing a losing game in my business. The end came last night. At ten o'clock this morning, I stood before the cracked mirror in a shabby lodging house and held a pistol to my temple. As I did so, my eye fell upon the paper that a chambermaid had just spread out on the bureau in place of cover. Without my own volition, I am sure, I read the words of the interview with C. C. Barnard.

"Now, he made his money in the business that has undone me. I've envied and admired him ever since I've been in it. And when I realized that he was using prayer as his strongest asset, as a working force, I dropped that pistol as if it were hot.

"Why, I was brought up on prayer, and have always respected it; but I didn't know that it could be used in that practical way. If Mr. Barnard can do that, and does not hesitate to acknowledge his use of that great Power, I can do it.

"I prayed right then and there, without stopping to get down on my knees, and with the strongest faith;—why, I just knew that what I needed and wanted was mine! You may not believe this. It seems too miraculous to tell about; but I had not gone a block from that lodging house before I met a man I knew, and he wanted to buy some seemingly dead property of mine—for cash—to start a new business.

"Some day, I'll write to Mr. Barnard or tell him face to face what he has done for me. But you show him this. If everybody was as willing as he to spread good news around, the world would be a different place.

"Put me down for five subscriptions. Check enclosed. I have some friends who need your messages."

Miss Stanley made no comment, but handed her chief two more letters. Both referred to the dope fiend's brave but sensitive wife.

"Tell her to come to me," wrote a certain rich man, "if she's got books to sell. I'll put in a whole library."

"Send her to my office," wrote a celebrated physician, "I'll cure her husband It's an expensive process, but it shall not cost her a cent."

Subscriptions were doubled,—trebled. One manufacturer ordered twenty subscriptions to circulate among his employees.

The telephone broke in upon the letter reading. The booming voice of the expressman smote upon Chauncey's ears.

"Say, mister, wot d'yuh know 'bout dis

here? De gang got on to de racket youse give me in de paper, and wot d'yuh tink dey's up and done? Dey gets togedder and orders a big bunch o' posies to send to my li'l woman. And wot kind does dem guys order? Orchards—*orchards!*—de kind de President's wife always wears to get her picture taken in. Why, orchards is two bucks apiece! Now, wot d'yuh know—wot d'yuh—" The big voice had to recover itself sufficiently to add: "Say, mister, if you're hankerin' for it, just put dat good news in your paper along wid de rest."

When Chauncey turned toward his stenographer, he saw only the masses of dark hair above the slender white neck. Miss Stanley's face was hidden in her arms resting on the typing desk. Chauncey thought she was crying, but she simply moaned. He told her about the expressman, and she lifted her head and looked at him.

"Oh, Mr. Perry, don't—don't give it up! I'll stand by you, Mr. Perry. I'll work for the merest stipend,—enough for food and a room; and I'll work at anything—any department. Why, Mr. Perry, I was saved, too. I had been having dreadful thoughts."

In the silence that followed, the little clock on Chauncey's desk palpitated with silvery vibrations. Nuntia Bona sprang upon her master's shoulder and purred softly against his ear.

Chauncey presently turned and looked long at Miss Stanley.

"I'll never give it up," he said solemnly, "*never*—Mary."

The second number of the *Fortnightly Good News* contained this short editorial:

"The best of all good news that has come into this office is that *good is not new*. Kindness is commoner than cruelty; generosity commoner than greed. Heroism is so abundant that it makes cowardice stand out as some rare and valuable jewel. Love is not only more overwhelmingly in evidence than hate, but our atmosphere seems to teem with it. We are surrounded by it as we walk. It sweeps about us, holds us, protects us—when we don't fight it off.

"Our own investigations, and the ardent, enthusiastic labors of our staff compel us to accept the above as being absolutely true.

"It has been thought expedient not to give the names of the persons concerned in the items published, but the actual facts we will continue to give, and the names may be learned through this office by consent of the persons themselves. The *Good News* will not cease to be a vigorous and searching right hand to find out what all these wonderful left hands are doing."

This paragraph appeared under *Corrections*:

"The editor of *Good News* has been sadly maligned in his own sheet. We wish to correct the false impression.

"It was stated in our first issue that we worked for a month in company with our stenographer and never once invited her to luncheon, never asked if she was fond of the theater, never told her she did her hair beautifully.

"We want to state that in the fortnight just past, we have taken the stenographer in question out to luncheon twelve times, that we invited her twice to go to the theater (she has accepted both invitations), and we wish especially to affirm that she does do her hair beautifully."

FOR March: THE RIGHT EYE OF CARDAMON *by William Hamilton Osborne*, the unique case of a criminal lawyer whose right eye exercises a powerful influence over a jury.

IN ACCOUNT WITH OLD GLORY

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

"Killed in action" is the official entry on the company's roster after the name of Littleford Dew, which does not in the least keep the late Mr. Dew from bobbing up again at a critical moment.

VERYBODY in Manila knew him, and nobody in Manila knew him. He was a big young fellow, tall and built in perfect proportion; he wore a yellowish-brown vandyke beard, which seemed odd and incongruous when one noticed the unmistakable youth in his eyes and in those portions of his cheeks that were bare. His walk was almost the swagger of one born to the sea and ships; he spoke with the drawl almost of a mountaineer, though his speech was always that of a well-bred person.

Manila saw him unfailingly at the pony races and at the cockpits of the Spaniards, and he was always present when the American soldiers played a game of ball. Manila inquired of itself his name and his business, and had no answer that satisfied. There were those who, driven by curiosity, went to the Hotel del Oriente's register to learn the name of this Mystery. They saw there, in a bold and somehow whimsical handwriting, simply this:

"El Vagabundo."

"But he is no vagabond, certainly," they would say to the clerk, "for he goes immaculately dressed, and he has money. What does he do, and from where does he come?"

"Without doubt, he is an American," the Spanish clerk would answer. "As to what he does—"

A characteristically Latin shrug invariably finished the sentence.

And there Manila's inquiries found their stone wall. So it was that everybody and nobody knew this man who styled himself whimsically, "The Vagabond."

Each evening the band of an American regiment of infantry played on the Luneta; and each evening Manila's elite, which is and will ever be a most cosmopolitan elite, went out to the Luneta to hear Carnival of Venice and Il Trovatore and Semper Fidelis—and never grew tired of it. Elite or not, El Vagabundo also went to the Luneta each evening. But he didn't go to hear the band; he went because he was fairly sure of seeing a certain very comely young Englishwoman there, and for no other reason. He knew her name no more than she knew his; but that mattered little to him.

She came always in an open carriage, with a Mestizo driver in livery and with a Mestiza duenna,—after the Spanish fashion,—and the carriage was always stopped beside the same great royal palm.

And, although the man who wrote his name "El Vagabundo" did not know it, Miss Althea Doris Caythorn went to the Luneta each evening for something very like the same reason that sent El Vagabundo there. The attraction was mutual, and one may not easily find it in his heart to blame either of them; for the two stood head and shoulders, in more ways than one, out of the light-headed Luneta crowd. And then, perhaps Miss Caythorn's curiosity was piqued; it is quite like a woman, you know, to wish to unravel a mystery—and El Vagabundo himself was nothing less than the most inviting of mysteries. Then came,—through the clever hands of Destiny itself, doubtless,—an evening when Miss Caythorn drove out to the Luneta behind a pair of new ponies, ponies that were wholly unaccustomed to the blare of the great brass horns. At the first burst of the music, the little horses reared, and those just

ahead were in grave danger of being injured by the iron-shod hoofs. Miss Caythorn smothered a cry of fright and glanced appealingly toward the vandyked American. Two more seconds, and El Vagabundo was holding the ponies firmly to the ground, and Miss Caythorn was alighting for the express purpose of thanking him for his aid.

She did it very graciously. Then she saw that he had been hurt. A hoof had come down on his right foot, and the white shoe was fast being dyed a bright crimson.

Miss Caythorn put the Mystery in her carriage, and had him driven straightway to the Emergency Hospital.

And there they became very well acquainted before another twenty-four hours had passed.

If you could have seen this girl, you wouldn't have marveled, surely, at El Vagabundo's pretending a little concerning the healing of his injured foot. She was handsome rather than pretty, tall and rangy and blue-eyed; she had a smile that was unforgettable, and her hair was of the kind that catches and holds the sunlight; and, best of all, she was one of these confidence-winning, pal-girls whose very presence is comradeship of a fine sort. During the afternoon of El Vagabundo's second day in the hospital, she brought her father in to see him. Old John Caythorn was a plain but good-mannered Englishman with a perpetual twinkle in his eyes; he, too, liked the American.

And then El Vagabundo learned to his profound regret that the Caythorns were only visiting in Manila; that they had their home on Tablas Island, which is one of the Visayas, and on which they had extensive rice and sugar cane plantations; and that they were returning to Tablas within a week.

"Were you not afraid," he asked, "to leave your properties at the mercies of the *insurrectos?* I have heard that Luk Ban's men have been particularly troublesome in the Visayas of late."

"Oh, no!" smiled Caythorn. "There is a regiment of American soldiers on Tablas now, you see."

El Vagabundo became much interested. "What regiment—do you know?"

Neither Caythorn nor his daughter remembered the number. But it was an infantry regiment.

On the last day of her visit in Manila, Miss Caythorn went to the Emergency to say good-by to the American for her father and for herself. They were sailing for Tablas at daybreak on the following morning, she told him.

El Vagabundo limped with her to a corner of one of the vine-shaded verandas, and there they sat down together. When they had talked for some ten minutes without saying anything whatever, Miss Caythorn asked rather diffidently if she might not know his name.

"You may," readily granted the Mystery, speaking in a low voice. He knew down in the soul of him that he could trust her. "My name is Littleford Dew. But you must never, never tell. If you told, it would be more—much more—than my life is worth."

She quickly promised: "I won't breath it, of course. But—"

"I see," Dew muttered thoughtfully. "Naturally, you think I must have a good reason for going about incognito in this quixotic manner; and you think, maybe, that I've done something bad. Well, I did do something bad. I admit it, Miss Caythorn. Since you won't breathe it, I am a deserter from the American Army of the Philippines!"

It came both a little desperately and a little defiantly, and somehow regretfully, too. Miss Caythorn turned upon him with wide open eyes.

"You, a deserter!" Her voice betrayed something other than surprise; it told of the keenest disappointment. For a deserter is quite as unspeakable a person to the English as to the Americans.

"But no common deserter, surely," she went on hopefully. "You were goaded to it; you had an extraordinary reason, I know."

"I did!" gratefully exclaimed Dew. He

tugged at that silky, incongruous beard of his.

"It was like this," he continued, almost whispering—

"Back in Tennessee the Dews and the Ardans have fought one another on sight since the close of the Civil War. They are not hill people, either. When I enlisted, the thing we call Fate for want of a better name saw to it that I was put into a company that had an Ardan for a top sergeant! It was this Ardan's father that killed my father.....I tried to get a transfer to another company, and failed. You see, I couldn't take orders from an Ardan—though I'm afraid you can hardly understand that! So what was I to do? This First Sergeant Ardan began to make life miserable for me from the moment he learned that my name was Dew. I say 'miserable'; but it is a weak word. I bore it for a year, a long year.....

"Then I decided that I must find a way out, at any cost. So, in the big fight at San Macati del Norte, where General Lawson was killed, I made a way out. I pretended to be shot while we were crossing the swift little Tubig Negra River, and I pretended to sink. In reality, I dove to a drift of reeds and cogon grass, and hid myself there until after nightfall. Opposite my name on the company's roster is written this: 'Killed in action.'

"Well, I went to Santa Cruz in the Laguna country, and I lived there among the Tagals and Chinos until I had grown a beard. They called me 'El Vagabundo,' and to me the nickname seemed a fit; for I felt that I was a vagabond. You see, I soon began to regret the thing I had done. I still regret it! Though I can't see how I might have done anything else, I still regret it. I may hate Sergeant Ardan with a great hatred, a hatred I cannot help any more than I can help the color of my eyes; but I love my regiment and Old Glory next to the memory of my mother.

"As to my way of living, I have been buying and selling copra through a Chino merchant on the Pasig. That is all there is to tell. And you must never breathe a word of it."

"I won't, ever," Miss Caythorn declared with some show of feeling. "I'm too sorry for you to betray you. Besides, I owe you something. And now I must go. It was a pleasure to know you. *El Vagabundo Magno!* I hope—very much—that I shall see you again. If ever you are on Tablas, please call. We shan't forgive you if you don't. We live at Bolongobos. Good-by!"

She rose and held down her hand. Dew also went to his feet, and he quite forgot to limp; he took the strong, slender hand in his and kissed it in the good old-fashioned way, and then he said with a smile that was a little wan:

"Good-by! And I must tell you this: If our stations in life were even halfway equal, I—I'd—"

He broke off and bit his bearded lip. Miss Caythorn blushed, took her hand from his and turned away. He watched her with great longing in his sober eyes as she disappeared down the crowded Escolta; and because she didn't once look back, he was disappointed.

Early on the next morning, a river *muchacho* carried a sealed note to him. He hastily tore open the envelope, drew out a single sheet of paper, and read, in a strong yet wholly feminine handwriting, this:

"After all, what is a station in life?"

Five minutes later, and Littleford Dew was in a carromata and being driven rapidly toward the lower Pasig waterfront. But the little schooner of the Caythorns' had already sailed, was even then nearing Cavite at the mouth of Manila Bay.

"I reckon," the man whom Manila knew as El Vagabundo drawled softly to himself—"I reckon she thought I didn't want her very badly if I didn't want her badly enough to go to Tablas for her!"

And he added with some spirit: "By God, I want her badly enough to go to the South Pole for her!"

Which should explain why it was that Littleford Dew, three days later, stepped from the little island steamer *Isla de Luzon* to the rotting wharf at Romblon and began immediately to search for a Visayan with nerve enough to take him in a *barote* to Bolongobos, the principal town on Tablas.

He reached Bolongobos on the follow-

ing afternoon, and was carried ashore on the bare brown back of a Pampangan beachcomber. A sallow-faced corporal of the port went lazily down to the water's edge to meet him.

"I'm looking for the home of John Caythorn the Englishman," began Dew—and then he went pale, for by the number he saw on the corporal's battered hat he knew that it was his own regiment that was doing a sort of garrison duty there at Bolongobos!

But the non-commissioned officer failed to notice Dew's perturbation. He very readily directed the newcomer to a big and sprawling house of stone and hewn mahogany and bamboo and nipa, which set at the foot of a semi-circular and precipitous line of hills that hugged the town on three sides like a pair of gigantic arms.

Dew thanked the corporal and hastened away. As he walked through the narrow, crooked, pickaninny-lined streets, he met many men that he had known, men who had been his comrades. None of them, however, recognized him, owing to his beard and the clothing he wore. He noted that they were a thin, yellowish, downcast lot, and he wondered much at that. This regiment that he loved had been noted for its sheer fineness of manhood.

A hundred yards from the home of the Caythorns, he halted a soldier whom he did not know. There were questions that he wished to ask, and this man, doubtless, could answer them.

"What's the matter with you fellows of the ——th?" he frowned. "You look sick, the whole outfit of you!"

"Sick?" droned the soldier, his voice half lifeless, half a sneer. "I should say! We *are* sick, Bo. Ever on Samar? The malaria there is like the black plague! We've all got it. Half the officers, even, are down on their backs with the shakes. And we got bullets, too, on Samar. The gugus there, Luk Ban's bunch, killed a lot of us—including the colonel and two of the majors and a few captains and lieutenants. Bo, this regiment has lost its nerve! It's the truth. Ever hear of an engineer losing his nerve? Sure, you have. A regiment can lose its nerve just the same as one man. Malaria and the gugus have got our goat for fair, Bo—especially the malaria, but the gugus are bad. Right here on *peaceful* Tablas, where we were sent for a rest, they shoot down at us from the hilltops every hour or so—and what can we do? It's the constant dread. It's——"

As though to bear him witness, a little spurt of sand leaped into the air a few yards down the street, and a Remington's slug ricocheted out to the glasslike surface of the bay.

"See there?" growled the soldier. "Yes; lost its nerve. And the pity of it all, Bo, is that this outfit is made up entirely of Southern men. Me, I'm from Georgia. And, Bo, I wouldn't mind if I were dead."

With a yellowish and sickly smile, he turned and walked slowly away. Dew stood and watched him go and regretted as he had never before regretted. He had thought that he loved the old ——th before; but now——

"God!" he said aloud. "And they're all Southern men!"

A half-naked pickaninny approached him shyly with the customary whine of the Filipino beggar: *"Pobre, senor! Pobrecito!"* It brought him back to himself. He gave the little Visayan a *peseta* and a few *centavos*, turned as a man with wooden joints and went on toward the big house of the Englishman and his daughter.

Miss Caythorn saw him coming and went down the veranda steps to meet him, and he knew by the eyes of her that she was glad that he had come. They shook hands warmly without a word, and turned toward the house. Dew suddenly realized that he had placed himself in an awkward position by so soon accepting the Caythorns' invitation to visit them. Well, he would make no excuses; he would tell the truth and bullhead through with it, as he had done more than once when dilemmas confronted him.

"Matters are growing desperate here in Bolongobos," murmured Miss Caythorn. "There is a new insurgent leader, Beltran Angga; he has hordes of riflemen and bolomen. There on the veranda sit father and Lieutenant-Colonel Wendell; by what name shall I introduce you?"

"Ansley," quickly whispered Dew—"it's my middle name."

He met the commander of his regiment, who had the same malarial look that the soldiers under him had. A moment later, the lieutenant-colonel rose and went toward his quarters. Old John Caythorn stood watching him with worriment in his eyes.

"He won't believe it," muttered Caythron, "I couldn't make him believe it! Now I beg pardon, Mr. er—Ansley! Sit down and have a cigar, and I'll explain. Althea those matches on the railing—please."

The three of them took chairs, and Dew lighted a fragrant Sumatra.

"This is what he wouldn't believe," went on Caythorn. "We had word, through one of the most trustworthy of our servants, that the insurgents are going to attack the Americans here in Bolongobos at daybreak to-morrow. There is scarcely a doubt as to the truth of it. But we can't blame Wendell; there are always so many rumors, you know, er—Ansley. Funny I never had your name before! But you Americans are peculiar, some of you. I say, Ansley, hadn't you better go to Wendell's headquarters and try to impress upon his mind the importance of preparing for attack? It's almost sure to come! Angga's men, some two thousand of them, may swoop down from the hills and massacre your countrymen!"

"Wendell, like his men, is sick; if you couldn't make him believe there's danger, I'm sure that I couldn't," said Dew. He continued evenly, "I think I have a plan that will save the regiment. It occurred to me as I walked up from the bayshore. There is but one thing that will make this sick outfit fight; and, with the aid of Miss Caythorn, we can make that one thing before time for the attack."

He turned to Caythorn's daughter with this: "Have you a sewing machine? And are you willing to work with me all night for the salvation of a thousand soldiers?"

"Yes, to both questions," answered Miss Caythorn.

"Then would you mind going with me?" Dew rose. "I saw half a dozen Chino stores down near the bayshore."

"With pleasure, Mr. D——Ansley," smiled Althea Doris Caythorn.

They worked hard, that night, until an hour before daybreak. And when their work was finished, Littleford Dew knew how to operate a sewing machine very well, for a man.

Slowly the dawn crept upward from behind the eastern sea, and slowly the soft darkness gave away to rosy light. The hordes of brown men who served Beltran Angga, armed with Mausers and Remingtons, bolos and krises, had already crept down from the hilltops and formed a long, solid line a little above the level of the town. They were prepared to rush the Americans; at a given signal, that brown line was to fall upon Bolongobos, and every white man save the Englishman was to be put to death. It had all been most carefully and diabolically planned.

Just when it was fairly light, at the Filipino's favorite time to make attack, the signal was given by the half-Moro Angga. The brown men began their silent swooping through the guava bushes that stood along the foot of the semicircular range of hills.

And at their first movement, the American trumpeters sounded the call to arms! For the ——th was ready and waiting. Lieutenant-Colonel Wendell had taken new counsel with himself.

The regiment quickly deployed by companies, and the color sergeant waved Old Glory in advance of them. There came the command to meet Angga's men with their own tactics, with a charge. The sick thousand began to move forward, but somehow sluggishly, and Angga's men began to fire. Then something happened—

To a place beside the color-bearer sprang, it seemed from nowhere, a big and yellow-bearded man who waved yet another flag—and it was the proud and beautiful Battleflag of the Confederacy! And then from this man's throat pealed a mighty cry—the old, old, ear-splitting Rebel yell!

For a few seconds after that cry there was silence save for the firing of Angga's soldiers. Then the old yell of the South was taken up by a thousand throats, and

the wildest of charges began—the regiment had its nerve once more—it forgot its officers, and swept onward with the force of a tornado; nothing could have held it in check!

And leading it went, side by side like two good brothers, Old Glory, the Magnificent and the beautiful Battleflag of the Confederacy

When Littleford Dew came to his senses again, it was night. He noted in a dazed fashion that he was in the regiment's hospital, and that one of his shoulders was bandaged; also there was a bandage around his temples, and another covered the calf of his right leg. Lieutenant-Colonel Wendell, a doctor, and a nurse were beside him. Upon seeing his eyes open, the doctor leaned forward.

"Be quiet as you can, Mr. Ansley," he advised. "You're pretty badly shot up, but you'll get over it. By the way, we whipped them in just ten minutes!"

Littleford Dew smiled his whimsical smile. An hour later, he seemed much better, and the lieutenant-colonel said to him:

"At the first, you were delirious, and you babbled of Sergeant Ardan; did you know him?"

"Yes, I knew him," muttered Dew.

"He was killed," said the regiment's commanding officer, "in a battle at San Macati del Norte."

TWO LIVELY STORIES FOR MARCH

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS *by G. A. Wells.* The purloining of a few pots of baked beans from the cook's galley is not looked upon as a minor offense by the Commander of the U. S. S. Carolina. As a fitting punishment, he refuses to grant shore leave on the Glorious Fourth to any but officers and the ship's ball team. The crew's opinion of this action is something that can be seen but not heard. It is so vividly expressed that it is distinctly visible on a dark night, and leaves nothing to the imagination.

Psychological moments are like opportunities that knock at the door; they arrive when one is taking a bath or sleeping the sleep of the weary. Perhaps you have had one or two in your life; but whether you have or not, it is doubtful if you have ever deliberately planned one. In THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT *by Lee Pape,* two bank clerks spend a week close to nature planning to put salt on the tail of Romance at a manufactured opportune moment, after which they flit to the seashore to carry out their scheme.

THE SKYSCRAPER IN B FLAT

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK

Real estate has so many ills, including taxes, water rates, interest, insurance and bills for repairs, that when a building begins to shake with the ague, it is time to buy six per cent gold bonds, which are taxable, but not so subject to nervous breakdowns.

IN Chicago it would not have been a skyscraper, for it was only seven stories high, but here it towered far above every building in the city. It was built by Hickson W. Bond on the corner of Platte Avenue and T Street, a locality which only a year before had been an almost valueless suburb, given over to corn and potato patches. But a real Western boom had since inspired the town, streets had been extended and paved, Platte Avenue had a car line, houses and stores were going up like mushrooms, and there was not enough shop and office room for the demand. Consequently every one with a little capital was building.

Bond found his title to his lot disputed, and he had scarcely broken ground when he was checked by an injunction. The Greenberger Brothers, who controlled half the real estate business of the town, had bought up the contending claim, and the matter was fought out in the courts. Bond won, almost to his surprise, for his adversaries had spent much money and were confident of success.

With his surprise was mingled some apprehension. The Greenberger Brothers were hard men to outwit, and they did not easily forgive any one who succeeded in doing it. They made their money like Hebrews and spent it like Christians, to their own ends. They had it in their power to embarrass him seriously, for he was operating a large business on a small capital, which had been sapped by recent ligitation.

He proceeded with his building, however, and was relieved to find that the Greenberger Brothers made no sign of hostility. He strained his credit, but the building was finished early in October, with a great flourish of trumpets from the city press, proud of its new skyscraper. It was constructed, as usual, of steel girders covered with a thin shell of masonry, and was handsomely fitted up with marble and mosaic, with electric elevators, and mail chutes, and complicated heating apparatus. It was christened the Platte Building, and was almost filled with tenants as soon as its offices were opened for rent. The Central National Bank established itself upon the ground floor, and, at the prevailing rates of rent, Bond foresaw a golden harvest. He needed it badly, for he was skating on thin ice.

All went very well for a time. Bond's rents began to come in, and he was elected a member of the Board of Trade. Then, no one seemed to know how, a report began to go about that the Platte Building was unsafe, that the building laws had not been enforced, and that the framework was insecure. Bond privately attributed these slanders to his late antagonists, but fortunately he was able to dispose of them by a signed statement from the Building Inspector. But such rumors always leave some poison behind.

Late in the afternoon of the 18th of December, several of the occupants of the upper floors of the Platte Building noticed a faint tremor of the framework as if from the jar of heavy traffic outside. It was extremely slight, however, and at five or six o'clock almost every one left the building without having given the phenomenon a moment's thought.

Several business men returned to the building after dinner that evening, to deal with the unusual work incidental to the end of the year. These, when they arrived, found

the watchman of the bank in animated conversation with two policemen in the outer hall. He had telephoned for help, under the impression that an attempt was being made to undermine the vault.

The whole building was vibrating with a jarring tremor. The floors tingled unpleasantly under the soles, and a faint, tense, humming sound seemed to come from every inch of the walls. It was quickly clear that it could be from no burglarious mine. The police searched all the adjoining ground. There was nothing to account for the disturbance, and none of the neighboring buildings appeared to be affected in the least. There was no heavy traffic on the street at that hour and there was no wind.

Some one suggested an earthquake, but an earthquake is not localized in a city block. Bond was called by telephone. He arrived half an hour later, and found a large and increasing crowd on the sidewalk, touching the walls experimentally to feel the tremor, and listening to the increasing, droning humming of the framework. He at once started up-stairs to investigate, in which adventure no one cared to follow him. The whole building was empty. The scores of office doors were shut and dark. The elevators had stopped at six o'clock.

The cashier of the bank presently arrived in a state of much perturbation, and, after fussing about for some minutes, went to the vaults and came out laden with ledgers and tin boxes. Upon this suggestion, all the office occupants began to think of rescuing their books and papers. Cabs and express wagons were summoned, and the drivers were offered handsome rewards to go up to the higher floors where the owners of the endangered valuables dared not go.

By this time the oscillation of the building was really alarming. It wavered exactly as a bridge does at the passage of a heavy train. The news had spread rapidly through the city and a mob of a thousand persons very soon filled the street. Among these were most of the tenants of the Platte Building offices, but few dared to go inside.

Those heroes, however, who had ventured up-stairs, were working manfully. Excited by the shouts from below and by their own haste and danger, they fell into a perfect frenzy of rescue. Office doors were smashed recklessly open. A number of small safes came thundering ponderously down the circular stairway, and ledgers and boxes were dropped by dozens down the well. The men burst open locked desks, flung armfuls of documents and stationery out the windows, and turned on all the electric lights till the tall building glowed like a factory.

Presently some one raised a cry that the building was rocking, and the crowd, which now extended for several blocks, surged wildly back. It was true. Almost imperceptibly, but certainly, the dark top of the skyscraper was swaying against the starry sky. The workers inside the building came down-stairs at a run, and were cheered frantically as they emerged. The few police, taking advantage of the crowd's retreat, established regular fire lines and warned every one from the adjacent buildings. It was not hard to keep the affrighted people back, however, and every face was upturned toward the enormous structure that was expected immediately to come crashing down.

But it did not fall at once. The swaying motion increased, but very gradually, while the humming note of its vibrations rose to a sound of tremendous volume. Gently and slowly to and fro it rocked, and a shade further at each oscillation. In a few minutes the shell of masonry and stucco began to peel off and fall, in lumps at first, and afterwards in great sheets. Through the exposed iron skeleton streamed floods of electric light from the still burning lamps. The whole immense crowd fell silent, and there was no more noise or shouting. The magnitude and mystery of the event overawed them.

Just inside the fire lines stood Bond, his hands clenched in his coat pockets, impotently peering from under his hat brim at his tottering fortunes. They were all locked up in that unstable frame of steel. So far as any theory of the catastrophe was concerned, his mind was blank. He

simply felt convinced that an enemy had done this, and, being Western bred, he was not disheartened,—only wrathful and perplexed.

Hour after hour passed. In spite of the midnight December cold the crowds grew, and still the skyscraper did not fall. It swung ponderously, far out to the right, pausing as if hesitating to topple over, and then far back to the left. The slam of swinging doors resounded crashingly from every floor as it reeled. It seemed impossible that the fabric could endure longer, though it was a mere network of locked girders, almost as strong and elastic as a steel bar.

All that night the firemen and police swarmed helplessly about the tottering building. Bond had offered a thousand, then five thousand dollars, for a successful scheme for steadying it. All street cars were stopped within four blocks. They sounded the earth in the neighborhood and found it solid. Men were even sent into the sewers with delicate instruments to detect any subterranean trembling, but none could be observed. All the disturbance was localized in the building.

When the gray dawn came up over the prairie the skyscraper was still standing, though it swayed now like a flagstaff in a high wind, and it was very evident that its collapse was at hand. All the glass was broken from the windows, a great part of the masonry had fallen, and it looked like the gutted ruins from a fire. As it reeled from side to side with a terrific rush and swing the creak of the drawing rivets could be heard through the humming of its tense framework.

Bond's only hope was that it might not destroy too much other property in its fall. He had been furiously busy in helping to clear the adjoining buildings. He had been on his feet all night, but he did not feel either cold or fatigued. He decided at this stage to telephone to his wife, who must be in a state of extreme anxiety, for she had sent two or three messenger boys to find him during the night.

The nearest telephone happened to be in the store of a piano-dealer in the next block. The proprietor, like most of his neighbors, had remained down town all night, and was just sitting down to a tray from a restaurant when Bond entered.

As he opened the telephone cabinet something snapped loudly with musical ring in the shop. Bond, whose nerves were at concert pitch, jumped, and the proprietor swore.

"Another string gone!" ejaculated the dealer. "Every blessed piano in the shop, I believe, has snapped its B-flat string since last evening. It's the noise from that cursed building of yours."

Getting up, he fingered half a dozen keyboards till he found one still intact, and struck the B flat sharply. The note was exactly attuned to the vast hum from the shaking skyscraper. A moment later and this string also flew asunder.

"The Platte Building is tuned to B flat," observed the musician, dryly. "Every piece of metal has its musical note, you know. If you struck this note inside your building it would set every frame vibrating. You haven't had any brass bands playing there lately, have you?"

Bond's mind caught the idea like a flash. He recollected some elementary experiments in physics, and the laws of vibrations. He thought hard for a half minute, and then hurried back to the street, without having touched the telephone.

As he returned toward the skyscraper he glanced up, and his heart misgave him. The risk was too great. The enormous dismantled framework seemed to sway till it almost overhung the adjoining buildings. But, mustering his nerve, he went on, pushing roughly through the packed crowd. The police, recognizing him, let him through the lines, but when they saw him approach the crumbling doorway, they ran after him shouting. But by that time he was already upon the stair.

Bond had not been used to much violent exercise, but he went up the eight flights of the circular stairway at a run, without noticing them. The jar and sway of the floors was like the sickening heave of an earthquake. Through the broken walls the light poured freely, mingling with the glow of electricity in the halls. The floors were littered with every sort of office supply.

The doors were splintered and swinging. The building looked as if it had been shelled and afterwards looted.

On the topmost floor the motion was so violent that he was obliged to lean against the walls to keep his balance. The wreckers had not ascended so high, and all the doors were still shut and locked along the hall. In fact, few of the rooms on this floor had even been rented, and it was used mostly for storage.

At the extreme end of the hall a door bore the gilt sign:—

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The door was locked, but Bond burst it open with his shoulder. There was a bright outer office, with several glass cases, badly damaged, containing beautiful violins. Beyond this a door stood ajar into a room, from which proceeded a clear, musical tone.

Bond rushed towards it. The inner room was fitted up as a workshop, and was half open to the outer air by the fall of the masonry. On an elaborate joiner's bench was clamped a bass viol, and upon it a peculiarly shaped bow ran regularly to and fro across two strings, with a monotonous iteration of sound. This bow was attached to a flexible steel rod that played from a purring electric motor beside the instrument.

Bond scarcely knew what he had expected to find, but he was astonished. There was no one in the room. But he brought a hammer smashing down upon the whole musical apparatus, and the ceaseless B-flat drone was silent. Then after a glance about the place he went down-stairs again, sliding most of the way on the banister rail.

For half an hour after he reached the sidewalk again there was no visible change in the condition of the skyscraper. It still reeled and tottered. Then, by minute degrees, the oscillations grew slower and weaker. In an hour and a half it was plain that the building was regaining its balance. It was then nearly eight o'clock.

Bond thereupon looked up the address of Gotthard Klein in a city directory, and started to find him, with rage in his heart. The place turned out to be a pretty suburban cottage, with early smoke rising from the chimney. The door was opened by Mrs. Klein herself, a middle-aged, fresh-faced woman, with a faint German accent.

"Is Mr. Klein in? I must see him," demanded Bond, sternly. "I am the owner of the Platte Building, where he has his office. You know, of course, what has been going on there?" he added, at the woman's look of bewilderment.

"No," she said, doubtfully. "I have no time to read the papers. Gotthard is here, yes,—but so sick! He will not know you. The doctor says it is pneumonia. He should not have worked yesterday. He had to come home and go to bed at three o'clock. I have not closed an eye this night."

She led Bond in, and gently opened a door into an adjoining bedroom. There lay the violin builder, flushed with fever, his eyes shut, but muttering incoherent German words. Sobered by this sight, Bond stepped back and softly closed the door again.

"Your husband builds violins. Does he do anything else?" he asked.

"He makes also guitars, sometimes, and mandolins. And he invents, oh! wonderful things. He is working now on a violin to play itself, like the machines to play pianos. But I ought not to tell you of this. It is not finished."

"Hum!" said Bond, meditating. "Do you know that he went away yesterday and left the electric power turned on and his invention running?"

"No,—heavens! Will he have to pay for all this time? Is it running yet?" she ejaculated, horrified in all her thrifty soul.

"No," said Bond. "I turned it off."

NEXT month: EVE'S DAUGHTERS *by Anna Brownell Dunaway*, the third in the series of "Henry" stories.

(*Continued from page 2*)

contrast of the two leading characters is well done. Their reaction upon each other creates a suspense which is maintained throughout the story. The character of the little newspaper man is sympathetically drawn, and it is refreshing to meet this would-be heroic little man, who achieves heroism by mistake. If the author does not watch out, his two happy-go-luckies, Richmond Ed and Sloker, will cease to be ne'er-do-wells and will become the staidest of models for virtue and uprightness, merely by dint of their own unclaimed good deeds.

Colonial attitudes in modern times are portrayed in *The Woman With the Odd Neck*. The story is told by a villager, who is sufficiently simple-minded to understand and even partially share the prejudice against the title character, yet worldly-wise enough to realize the injustice of persecuting her. It is this narrator's taint of superstition that enables the author to hint vaguely at three reasons for the woman's deformity: that like the Boatswain in "The Tempest," her face being "perfect gallows." fate had preordained her to die by the rope; that her affliction was but a birth mark and that her illness and persecution drove her to suicide; or that she was the reincarnation of some dead person, come back to die a second time by hanging, after haunting the decaying old house of Sam Gifford, the man who buried himself in the backyard *and filled in the grave himself*. These indefinite notions increase the mysterious horror of the tale; but the story is not conclusive. It has a plot that is either no plot at all, or one that is too deep for the average reader's comprehension.

The well known and accepted superstition of seafaring people furnishes the theme of *The Curse of Ali Khan*. The oriental characters are mystical, as they should be; and the skipper is quite human. The story is mainly one of incident, and the various episodes serve to keep the interest alive until the introduction of the old Cingalese makes a dramatic situation which is the strong turning point of the story toward the climax. The author's list of all the ills which can happen to a ship is incomplete but still sufficient in number to convince a less superstitious person than a salt water sailor that it was time the ship was dead and buried.

In *The Continental Attitude*, the hostile attitudes of the Austrian policeman and the young lady arouse interest at the outset. From cross purposes to a common goal they work, the subsequent change in their attitudes being due to the sudden change of conditions around them. The child is deftly introduced for later use; but the final revelation, that he is the officer's son, detracts from the emotional punch of the ending. It is hackneyed and unnecessary that it be his son Martha saves in order to be commended for bravery. It would seem that the author had been in a similar situation so vivid is her description of the falling building, yet it is doubtful if a building undermined by an excavation would collapse so slowly as this one.

The Hazing of the Infant is a vivacious story with a finish that is supposed to surprise, but doesn't.

The fifteenth contest comprises the stories in this issue, (February); and all lists must be received at the office of the BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before March 1st. Prizes will be awarded March 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the May BLACK CAT; issued April 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

A PRIZE of $10 will be awarded to the member sending in the best criticism.

A PRIZE of $5 will be awarded to the member sending in the next best criticism.

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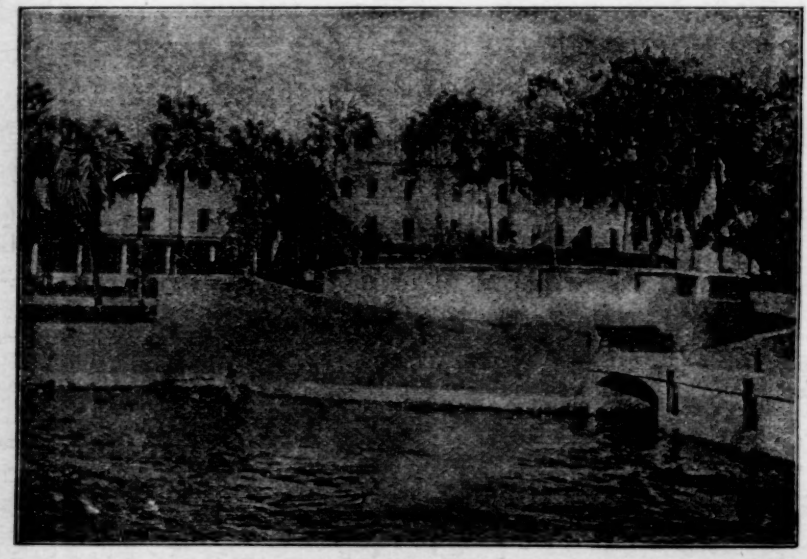

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"For fifteen years or more I have regularly purchased and read "The Black Cat" and would not be without it under any consideration. It's the best reading I ever got hold of, only sorry it's not published weekly instead of monthly."

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"You have boasted many times that "The Black Cat" contains only original, unusual and fascinating stories, and each time I read this statement I agree with it most heartily, which is saying quite a little for, as a rule, a statement of that kind, when read again and again, tends to lose strength along about the hundredth time one sees it in print in the same magazine."

"Just picked up the "Cat" for October — and read it through. Gratulation! Darned good stuff, especially "The Knave of Spades."

"I have been a reader of your magazine for quite awhile, and always read it from "kiver to kiver." Though it is small, every story in it is well worth reading and does not tire the patience of the reader by long, prefatory chapters."

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